

All or Nothing

*Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments,
and Skepticism in German Idealism*

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Author's Note

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Introduction

Why are the German idealists—primarily, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—so obsessed with the construction of a philosophical system—of what they would call *the* philosophical system? Why do they think it impossible to contribute to the resolution of a philosophical problem without attempting to resolve them all within an interconnected whole? Even if it is important—or at least worthwhile—to connect one's philosophical views into a systematic unity, why should systematicity require the strong degree of connection in virtue of a single principle insisted upon by the German idealists? Why, for that matter, should it be the pursuit of systematicity that gives German idealist philosophy its distinctive shapes—as if systematization were the first priority in philosophy rather than, say, the last? In short: Why do they seek, with so much urgency, to say everything about everything, which is unlikely to succeed, instead of being content to say something about something, which might avoid total failure? *Must* it be *all* or *nothing*?

For many philosophers from the Anglo-American tradition, these unanswered—indeed, mostly unasked—questions prevent the incorporation of German idealists into the canon of great philosophers who illuminated problems with which we are still concerned. Their systematic project seems not only immodest but, to speak frankly, *foreign*. To be sure, the German idealists are responsive to the perennial problems of philosophy, such as the possibility of knowledge, the freedom of the will, and the nature of morality and justice. But, we are told, their responses to these problems are so closely intertwined with their attempts to construct the system that

we cannot even *understand* these responses—let alone assess them—before we have learned to grasp the system, or some version of the system, as a *whole*. Confronted with such a demand—which seems not merely excessive but impossible to justify in advance, as well as incompatible with rigorous standards of clarity—most Anglo-American philosophers are content to leave the German idealists out of their conversations with the dead.

At the beginning of the analytic tradition that is still characteristic of Anglo-American philosophy, the exclusion was deliberate. Empowered by unprecedented developments in logic and confronted by unimagined revolutions in physics, the founders of Anglo-American analytic philosophy rejected the post-Kantian idealist tradition of their teachers as both outdated and confused. In its methods and concerns, analytic philosophy could seem as detached from its prehistory as astronomy from astrology, or chemistry from alchemy. Insofar as it had any historical affinities, analytic philosophy seemed largely pre-Kantian, as if the options were, once again, to be either a Leibnizian metaphysician or a Humean naturalist, but this time with a far more powerful logic. The Kantian revolution and its various continuations, including German idealism, now seemed a massive and unnecessary detour into a dead-end. The German idealists, no longer even the targets of criticism, were mostly ignored, ascribed to the foreign, so-called Continental side of contemporary philosophy.¹

In contrast to Anglo-American analytic philosophers, those who are called Continental philosophers typically see themselves neither as members of some relatively unified tradition nor as contrasts with their counterparts across the English Channel and the Atlantic. Still, British and American educations in philosophy are likely to be closer to each other than to German and French educations, and vice versa. One difference is that a German or French philosopher is typically expected to know something about German idealism, whereas a British or American philosopher is not. Whether as cause or effect, Continental philosophy is also far more likely than Anglo-American philosophy to be in conversation with German idealism. Indeed, some of the Continental philosophers who are best known in Britain and America—such as Jacques Derrida on the French side and Hans-Georg Gadamer on the German—seem to take it as obvious that the construction of what German idealists call the system, if success-

1. For an insightful discussion of the very idea of Continental philosophy, see Glendinning (1999).

fully executed, would be the culmination of philosophy as traditionally conceived. But, unlike the German idealists, these Continental philosophers may think either that the system *cannot* be completed or that it can be completed only through an *exclusion* whose cost is to be measured, not only in intellectual but also in ethical and political terms. The failure of the German idealist system—or the disappointment of its success—becomes the new topic of philosophy, or else the topic that constitutes some post-philosophical discipline.

In these Continental contexts systematicity is not an unasked question, but rather an unquestioned answer to the question of the nature of reason's fundamental demand—as if the fact that reason demands totality were obvious without justification and as if the import of such a demand were clear without explanation. Thus the German idealist conception of systematicity and its value stands between the Anglo-American and Continental traditions, which still, for the most part, pass each other by in mutual incomprehension. So great is this incomprehension that the very idea of two traditions, as well as the nomenclature, reflects only one point of view.

In recent decades, however, the Anglo-American/Continental divide has come to seem less absolute than before. One symptom of this change has been a striking revival of Anglo-American interest in German idealism. In the wake of the reemergence of Kant, since the 1960s, as both the subject of serious commentary and the inspiration for contemporary positions in almost every area of philosophy, there has been a more tentative reemergence of Hegel, followed by an even more tentative reemergence of Fichte. (Schelling's day has not yet come. He is still often invoked as the principal illustration of what German idealism must not be if it is to deserve contemporary interest.)² An impressive Anglophone literature has arisen in which German idealist texts are subjected to critical interpretation of a sort that typifies exchanges between analytic philosophers and their forebears.³ In Germany, too, it is no longer unheard of to regard, say, Fichte's conception of self-consciousness or Hegel's conception of logic as contributions to contemporary analytic debates in philosophy of mind and lan-

2. He is invoked thus in Pippin (1991). For an exception, see Bowie (2002).

3. See, for example Ameriks (2001), (2003a); Beiser (1987), (2002); Forster (1989), (1998); Martin (1997); Neuhauser (1990), (2000); Pinkard (1988), (1994), (2000), (2002); Pippin (1982), (1991), (1995), (1997); Redding (1996); Stern (1990), (1994), (1996), (2000), (2001); Taylor (1972), (1975); Westphal (1989a), (2003); Wood (1990), (1991).

guage.⁴ At the same time, prominent Anglo-American philosophers—such as Robert Brandom, Tyler Burge, Stanley Cavell, John McDowell and Hilary Putnam—who have worked their way to positions in manners that seem internal to their own tradition, have come to see themselves as retrieving insights from German idealism, insights that have been forgotten, along with the German idealists themselves, by the analytic mainstream.⁵

In these discussions, too, the question of systematicity remains unasked.⁶ Analytic commentators tend to organize their studies around the central figures of German idealism rather than around the problems and methods characteristic of the tradition, moreover, they often tacitly assume—and occasionally make it explicit—that German idealist insights can be taken seriously only to the extent that they are liberated from an obscure idiom and that the project of constructing the system is something outdated, confused, and to be left behind.⁷

One major reason for this neglect is that German idealism tends to be viewed, understandably enough, through its relationship to Kant, on whom there is already a significant Anglo-American literature with acknowledged contemporary implications. But Kant seems to accord systematicity neither

4. See, for example Frank (1991a), (1991b), (1995), (1997), (2003); Henrich (1971), (1982), (1991), (1992a), (1992b), (1997a), (1997b), (2003), (2004); Høegrebe (1989); Horstmann (1984), (1991), (2000); Klotz (2002); Stekeler-Weithofer (1992); Sturma (1985), (1993), (1995), (2000). See also Ameriks, Franks, Schönecker, and Stolzenberg (2005).

5. See, for example, Brandom (1994), (2000), (2002); Burge (1979), (1982), (1986a), (1986b), (1998); McDowell (1994). See also Ameriks, Franks, Schönecker, and Stolzenberg (2005).

6. For a notable exception, see Hösle (1987). For an exception that proves the rule, see Horstmann (1999), 276: "Hegel's philosophy represents in a paradigmatic sense a type of philosophy which is strongly committed to holistic tendencies. These tendencies are responsible for his being in favour of what might be called 'System-Philosophie.' Now, 'System-Philosophie' in Hegel's sense has been out of fashion from his days on, and I take it that nowadays nobody really wants to give the 'System-' version of a holistic approach in philosophy a second chance. If, however, there are good reasons to suppose that for Hegel the idea of a system was constitutive of a philosophical theory, then one wonders how it is possible to think of Hegel as a philosopher whose legacy is of some value for us."

7. For a characteristically straightforward expression of a view that others share but fail to articulate so forthrightly, see Wood (1990), 4–5: "Viewed from a late twentieth-century perspective, it is evident that Hegel totally failed in his attempt to canonize speculative logic as the only proper form of philosophical thinking. . . . Because Hegel regards speculative logic as the foundation of his system, we might conclude from its failure that nothing in his philosophy could any longer be deserving of our interest. But that would be quite wrong. The fact is rather that Hegel's great positive achievements as a philosopher do not lie where he thought they did, in his system of speculative logic, but in quite a different realm, in his reflections on the social and spiritual predicament of modern Western European culture."

the meaning nor the urgency ascribed to it by German idealists. If German idealism is seen exclusively as responsive to problems internal to Kant's critical project, then either German idealist assumptions about systematicity must be read into Kant or German idealism must be reconstructed without one of its signature concerns.

For a variety of reasons, then, the meaning and significance of the German idealist interest in systematicity remains unthematized. Consequently, so does the cost of either discarding it, as Anglo-American readers are apt to do, or of retaining it, in the way favored by many Continental readers.

To my mind, this failure to investigate and evaluate the problems to which German idealism responds—the problems to which the German idealist system, if constructed, would offer a solution—runs the risk of missing an opportunity to learn from engagement with German idealism. For the value of the history of philosophy—understood as a historical mode of philosophy, not as a part of history that is concerned with philosophical figures and works—lies not only in the fact that we can learn from our predecessors how to address in different ways the questions that concern us, but also in the fact that we can learn from them how to ask different questions, or how to ask our questions differently. If we assume that historical figures are asking or answering our questions as we do, then we run the risk of both distorting what they say and missing an opportunity to learn from them, whether positively or negatively. Anachronism is problematic in the same way as projecting one's own assumptions onto the person with whom one is speaking: it is rude, it is bad for conversation, and it makes it hard to learn anything new. In the history of philosophy, however, anachronism is also problematic for another reason. Here, our conversation partners are our predecessors. Their ways of asking and answering questions continue to exercise an effect—indirectly and, almost always, unconsciously—on the ways we ask and answer questions. If we project our self-understanding onto them, then we lose the opportunity for self-criticism and development.

It is crucial, then, to examine how problems arise for a philosopher or philosophical tradition. Moreover, it is only in light of the constitution of the problems addressed that we can expect to form an accurate conception of the *methods* that a philosopher or tradition may reasonably hope to employ. Whereas recent Anglo-American interpreters of German idealism have largely ignored the constitution of the tradition's problems, they have

addressed the tradition's methods, which have sometimes been characterized as transcendental arguments, using a term that emerged within the Anglo-American response to Kant. It is surely worthwhile to compare German idealist methods to those of Kant and to consider the pertinence of Kant's Copernican or transcendental turn. But to suggest that Kant focuses on transcendental arguments *in the contemporary sense* is already anachronistic. It compounds the difficulties still further to suggest that the German idealists follow Kant in this respect, without an adequate reconstruction either of the German idealist problematic, or of the Kantian problematic, or of the complex relationship between them.

Consequently, the first goal of this book is to investigate the constitution of the problems to which the German idealist systematization project is a response, and to assess the relationship between these problems and the questions motivating Kant. The second goal is to examine the characters, aspirations, and vulnerabilities of the methods employed by the German idealists. My hope is that this twofold account prepares the ground for work that must occur elsewhere: more detailed comparisons of German idealism with both Kantianism and contemporary projects in analytic and continental philosophy, and critical assessments of specific attempts to implement the German idealist project.

The approach I adopt here may be described as historically constrained reconstruction. Insofar as I seek to avoid anachronism, I operate under historical constraints. But my project is also reconstructive in at least three senses. First, and following more or less standard practice among Anglo-American interpreters, I try to develop, on the authors' behalf, the most philosophically powerful arguments and considerations compatible with their texts. Second, I do not limit myself to what the authors explicitly say; rather, I try to present their projects with maximum charity by developing arguments and considerations that were available to them. Although this mode of reconstruction is perhaps also standard, it plays an unusually prominent role in this book. For the little that the German idealists say about why they engage in their systematic project in the first place is not even close to sufficient to motivate the project for a reader educated in the Anglo-American tradition. Consequently, I draw heavily on arguments and considerations from texts that were known to the German idealists, texts that helped form them and the context in which they worked, texts by figures such as Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Salomon Maimon, and Karl Leonhard Reinhold. One of the great recent improvements in the study of

German idealism has been a twofold widening of focus, so that the development from Kant to Hegel is no longer seen as teleological and inevitable, and the so-called minor figures are no longer ignored. It is only when we attend to the problems motivating German idealism that we see just how crucial the contributions of these figures really are.

This book is also reconstructive in a third sense that concerns the interpretation of Kant developed in Chapter 1. The German idealists' relationship to Kant is at once both the obvious way to approach them and the stumbling block that prevents us from entering into their thought. For the idealists recognize Kant as their most immediate philosophical influence and initially describe their own project as the completion of Kant's unfinished revolution. Yet Kant himself repudiates the idealist project. It is a gesture that some contemporary Kantians continue to repeat.

On the one hand, there is no question that the German idealists misunderstand Kant in ways that no sophisticated Kant reader can miss. Sometimes they attribute to Kant a view of the cognitive faculties that cannot be his, such as the view that the faculty of understanding cannot be exercised unless the faculty of sensibility is also exercised, or the opposite view that there is no necessary connection whatsoever, but rather an unbridgeable dualism, between the two faculties. Similarly, they sometimes ascribe to Kant a view that makes little sense of his commitment to the existence of things in themselves as the grounds of the matter of our sensible intuition, such as the view that things in themselves must be independent not only of the distinctive forms of human cognition, but of reason as such, which makes them unthinkable.

On the other hand, Kant sees the German idealists *solely* through their deformations of some of his central concepts and, by insisting that their use of these concepts be understood according to his own standards, he foists upon them projects that cannot be theirs, such as the attempt to generate empirical objects from the empty forms of general logic alone.

Much of the literature sympathetic to German idealism assumes some German idealist interpretation of Kant and thereby fails to engage Anglo-American philosophers with a sophisticated and charitable understanding of Kant. At the same time, much of the literature critical of German idealism takes pains to detail the ways in which the idealists are wrong about Kant, and thereby fails to engage with the German idealist project in its own right. I will say more about the reasons for this hermeneutical tangle later in this introduction. In the body of the book, however, I develop an in-

terpretation of Kant—or, at least, of some central strands in Kant's critical philosophy—that represents neither Kant as *I* think we *should* read him nor Kant as the German idealists *actually* read him, but rather *Kant as the German idealists should read him*. It is an interpretation of Kant that aspires to maximize, as far as possible, *both* compatibility with Kantian texts *and* conduciveness for the motivation of the German idealist project. Thus it is more compatible with Kantian texts than the actual Kant-interpretations of the German idealists, but it is also more compatible with the German idealist project than some other Kant-interpretations that might be equally—or, arguably, more—compatible with Kantian texts.

Two contentions central to this book merit some advance warning. The first concerns the problems to which I take German idealism to respond, and the second concerns my interpretation of their response.

The problems that motivate philosophers seem to me to have a stratified structure. A problem that appears to be resolved or irrelevant can nevertheless continue to underlie the problems that motivate philosophers in a particular epoch, as strata of earth and debris continue to underlie the surface we currently inhabit. New considerations, or the rediscovery of old considerations, can then return the supposedly obsolete problem to the surface, perhaps altering its structure or giving it new import. If two philosophers overlap partially in the problems that they find compelling, sharing lower strata of problems, while differing with respect to higher strata, then, unless this partial overlap is made explicit, they will be peculiarly liable to talk past one another. For they may use identical formulations—the identity being rooted in the stratum or strata problems that they share—without realizing that they understand these formulations differently or accord them different imports—the difference being rooted in the stratum or strata of problems that they do not share.

So it is, I contend, with Kant and the German idealists. They share some strata of problems and differ with respect to others, which is why they talk past one another.

To see this, I argue, one must first see that the problems to which Kant responds are already stratified. At the lowest level lies the ancient worry that there can be no genuine justification because any putative justification is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma: if challenged, it turns out to lead either to an arbitrary assumption, or to a vicious circle, or to an infinite regress. This ancient worry takes on new import for Kant because, on the one hand, he takes modern rationalism—developed by Leibniz and mod-

ified by Kant himself before his critical turn—to have shown with unprecedented clarity what would be required to escape from the trilemma and to achieve genuine justification. On the other hand, Kant takes Newtonian—not Leibnizian—physics both to have realized the modern aspiration to natural science and to be unable in principle to meet the aforementioned requirements for an escape from the trilemma. Kant's response to this renewed problem gives rise to Kantian dualism, as I interpret it in Chapter 1: commitment to two orders of grounding, such that the noumenal escapes the Agrippan trilemma while the phenomenal does not, and such that the phenomenal is grounded in the Agrippan trilemma—not in the sense that the phenomenal is reducible to or even supervenient upon the noumenal, but rather in the sense that the fundamental categories that structure the phenomenal can and must be derived from the fundamental categories that structure the noumenal. An adequate understanding of the relationship between these two orders can be attained, according to Kant, only from the transcendental standpoint that characterizes his own philosophy, not from the empirical standpoint appropriate to everyday life and to natural science—the standpoint that, in his view, pre-Kantian philosophy has failed to abandon.

So far, both the problems motivating Kant and the German idealists and their responses to those problems overlap. Indeed, as I see it, the German idealists never cease to inherit some version of Kantian dualism, represented by the distinction between the transcendental standpoint required for philosophy and the empirical standpoint presupposed in everyday life and natural science. However, crucial differences emerge in the way that German idealists understand both the structure of a justificatory system adequate to escape the Agrippan trilemma and the nature of the problem raised for empirical knowledge by Agrippan skepticism. I deal with the former in Chapter 2 and with the latter in Chapter 3.

These differences have much to do with the momentous event initiated by Jacobi in 1785, which has come to be known as the Spinozism controversy. The German idealists accept Jacobi's contention that it is Benedict Spinoza—not Leibniz or the pre-critical Kant—who has shown what would be required for a genuine justification that escapes the Agrippan trilemma. Thus they are all committed, in various ways, to the view that genuine justification can be achieved only within a system that meets two conditions: the *holistic condition* that every particular (object, fact, or judgment) be determined through its role within the whole and not through

any intrinsic properties; and the *monistic condition* that the whole be grounded in an absolute principle that is immanent and not transcendent. Now, Jacobi himself thinks that, whereas the demand for such a system is the rigorously derived culmination of philosophical rationalism, the attempt to fulfill this demand must be disastrous not only in theory but also in practice. For such a system would not only be incapable of accounting for the individuality of persons and everyday objects, but it would also tend to annihilate the individuality of any person who actually came to believe it and live according to it. Rejecting Jacobi's fideist alternative, the German idealists face the problem of developing a version of Spinozism that escapes not only the Agrippan trilemma, but also what Jacobi calls nihilism. Hence, for the German idealists, it is indeed a matter of all or nothing.

In these two lessons learned from Jacobi, the German idealists differ from Kant. For them, the problem of escaping the Agrippan trilemma becomes the problem of achieving a Spinozist system that meets the holistic and monistic requirements, to which Kant does not subscribe. At the same time, the stakes have risen dramatically. For Kant, although skepticism about empirical knowledge is of crucial importance for setting philosophy on the secure path of a science, it is nevertheless a merely academic problem. Moral life is unthreatened by it, and, indeed, it does not concern everyday knowers or natural scientists, who have clearly achieved genuine justification. Rather, skepticism should be of concern only to philosophers, who need to explain the success of everyday knowers and natural scientists, and to replicate it in their own case, to the extent that this is possible. For the German idealists, however, skepticism—now transformed into nihilism, thanks to Jacobi—threatens every putatively justificatory practice, extending beyond the philosopher's chamber to the natural scientist's laboratory and, beyond the academy, to everyday life.

What complicates the relationship between the German idealists and Kant is the fact that all of them read Kant's critical works in the wake of the Spinozism controversy, although the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* predates that controversy by four years and although Kant is not concerned with the all-or-nothing problematic due to Jacobi. Indeed, widespread interest in Kant's critical project arises precisely because Reinhold—soon to become the first German idealist—presents it to the public as resolving the Spinozism controversy, in a way that is quite different both from the traditional rationalism of Moses Mendelssohn and from the radical

fideism of Jacobi. Partly because of this, and partly because of Jacobi's own references to Kant's *Critique*, the German idealists assume wrongly that, like them, Kant is concerned to achieve a Spinozist system that avoids nihilism. So, in light of this difference with respect to a stratum of problems, it is hardly surprising that the German idealists soon feel compelled to move beyond Kant's explicit formulations in order to pursue a project that they assume is implicit in his work, or that this leads to a breach with more orthodox Kantians and ultimately with Kant himself. Of course, the German idealists are also responsive to problems internal to Kant's critical project—problems by which one could be moved independently of Jacobian concerns. But even these problems, or one's sense of an attractive response to them, can be transformed in the context of the Spinozism controversy.

With respect to the response to these problems which I ascribe to the German idealists, I want to draw attention to my thesis that this response may be characterized in terms of a single project—or rather, a single family of projects, within which there are significant differences and disagreements. Since they share the need to respond to post-Jacobian problems, and since they share the sense that Kant's critical philosophy provides the resources for such a response, the German idealists tend to draw upon a shared set of ideas and methods, transformed once again by the exigencies of the Spinozism controversy. These resources, in my view, go far beyond those that tend to be appealing to contemporary analytic interpretations and appropriations of Kant. Thus, in addition to themes drawn from the Transcendental Deduction and the Refutation of Idealism, the German idealists also draw upon, for example, the Metaphysical Deduction and the Transcendental Ideal from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as well as the appeal to the *Factum* of reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the idea of intellectual intuition in the *Critique of Judgment*. (See Chapters 1, 4, and 5.) I contend that, in light of their shared problems and shared resources, it is possible to characterize in schematic terms a systematic project to which all the German idealists subscribe and to characterize the differences between them as disagreements about how to realize this schema. (On these differences, see Chapter 6, where I argue that, although I have drawn largely upon resources developed before 1800, none of the undeniably important developments after 1800 renders my reconstruction of the German idealist project irrelevant to that period.)

I am sure that this contention, like much else in this book, is open to

objection—indeed open to objection on many fronts. I hope that it will also serve as a provocation. In other words, I am sure that some readers will think that my account applies, more or less, to some idealists but not to Fichte, or to some but not to Schelling, or, most likely, to some but not to Hegel. (Other readers may well think that I am right about none of the above!) My hope is that those who believe that Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel is distinctive in a way that my account does not acknowledge will be moved to say in what this distinctiveness consists and that this will in turn give rise to a debate that goes beyond the familiar stereotypes of Fichte the subjectivist, Schelling the proponent of an absolute in whose night all cows are black, Hegel the all-consuming dialectician, and so on.

To counter the traditional and still prevalent orientation towards the major figures in the development of German idealism—especially Hegel—and towards the post-1800 versions of the system, I have deliberately focused in this book on the contributions of minor figures before 1800. This approach is not intended to minimize the importance of the major figures or of developments after 1800, but rather to place these figures and developments in what I hope will prove to be an illuminating context.

Kantian Dualism

Not to mention the task that touches the interest of philosophy most nearly at the present moment: to put God back again at the peak of philosophy, absolutely prior to all else as the one and only ground of everything, the unique *principium essendi* and *cognoscendi*, after all this time in which he has been put *beside* other finite things, or put off right to the end as a postulate that springs from absolute finitude.

—Hegel (1970), WGM, 2:195

How it could happen that a whole epoch of philosophers, from Reinhold to Hegel, was of the opinion that philosophy must be deduced from a single proposition—this has still remained unclear to me, and I have as yet found no answer for it in the literature.

—Röttgers (1975), 93, n. 28, cited by Ameriks (2000a); 1

To be sure, it seems odd that we can determine our concepts of things in themselves appropriately only insofar as we first lead back [*reduciren*] all reality to the concept of God and that we should apply it to other things as things in themselves only insofar as it finds its place within [that concept]. That alone is properly the means of separation of everything sensible and of appearance from that which can be considered through the understanding as appropriate to things in themselves.

—Kant (1900–), BJPM, 8:154

1.1

What is German idealism? It is not, I suggest, a philosophical position, but rather a *family of philosophical programs*. What, then, do members of this family have in common? What are the topics about which, like members of every family, they tend to argue?

In the first place, German idealist programs share a common origin in Kant's critical philosophy. More specifically, German idealists are *post-Kantians*: they seek to complete the revolution begun by Kant, which, they believe, requires them to go beyond Kant himself. For the time being, the

following will suffice as an expression of Kant's revolutionary insight: the truth of the claims to knowledge classified by Kant as synthetic *a priori*—knowledge of mathematics, and of metaphysics, including the foundations of physics—does not consist, as has been assumed hitherto, in conformity to things as they are in themselves, independently of the human mind. It consists rather in conformity to the *a priori* conditions of human knowledge, which constitute the objects of human knowledge, objects that are thus mind-dependent.¹ Just as Copernicus proposes that the motions we observe every day are not absolute motions independent of us, as has always been assumed, but are rather motions relative to our own standpoint, so Kant proposes that the objects with which we interact every day are objects relative to our own standpoint.

Any Kantian or post-Kantian should agree to this form of words. But, like Copernicus's astronomical revolution, it is open to many interpretations.² Kant's understanding of his revolution will be the theme of this chapter and the next. The German idealist understanding of the Kantian revolution will be the implicit theme of this entire book, to which I will return explicitly in the final chapter.

To go beyond Kant is, at some point, to part company with Kant. Where, then, is the parting of the ways?

It is often said that Kant is a dualist whereas German idealists are monists.³ But, as it stands, this is nothing but a slogan. First, there are many different senses of dualism and monism, not all of which conflict. Second, without an understanding of the complex of problems to which it responds, a philosophical doctrine is a dead letter. To determine where Kantians and German idealists accompany one another and where they part ways, it is necessary to determine the complex of problems to which each responds and to examine the relationship between the two complexes. The topic of

1. Kant (1900–), KrV, Bxvi–xxii.

2. Newton is unusual for believing that the upshot of Copernicus's astronomical revolution was that absolute motion needed to be determined. Most Copernican philosophers, like Descartes and Leibniz, took the upshot to be rather that there is no absolute motion.

3. Here, for example, is a characterization of "the standard view of German idealism" from Horstmann (2000), 117: although convinced of the value of Kant's philosophy, "they were also convinced that Kant had not really succeeded in developing his systematic approach because he was hopelessly entangled in a dualistic mode of thinking which was fundamentally at odds with his proclaimed goal of unity . . . in order to avoid Kant's dualism, [they believed,] . . . one had to supplement his philosophy with a monistic basis and accept that monism is the only viable alternative to dualism."

this chapter will be the *overlap* between the problems confronting Kant and the problems confronting German idealists. As we shall see, this is a delicate matter: there is an overlap, but even a slight shift in one direction or another is sufficient for the overlap to all but vanish.

Some complications must be acknowledged in advance. First, it will not be helpful to begin with what the German idealists themselves say about Kant or with what Kant himself says about them. For they interpret Kant's revolution in the wake of another major philosophical event, the Spinozism controversy initiated by Jacobi.⁴ Consequently, much of what the German idealists say directly about Kant would be rightly rejected by contemporary Kant interpreters. Meanwhile, Kant's understanding of what came to be known as German idealism is mainly second-hand, derived from the letters and reviews of some of his followers who are hostile to the new developments. It is on the basis of this unsympathetic interpretation that Kant publicly repudiates German idealism in 1799, after ten years in which it has appeared to have his support.⁵ Thus my topic in this chapter will not be the ways in which either Kant or the German idealists understand their commonality. For their understandings are too partisan to serve as a starting point for charitable assessment. Only in the second chapter will I begin to thematize the differences between the Kantian and German idealist problematics, attending to the transformative effect of the Spinozism controversy on German idealist readings of Kant.

At this point, a second *complication* arises. For Kant is a moving target. Far from being static, his thoughts continue to develop and transform, even after the revolution marked by the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. To be sure, this is also true of each German idealist. But Kant's development is especially pertinent to the assessment of the relationship between Kantianism and German idealism. For a certain picture of his development can be suggested when Kantians accuse German idealists—as they often do—of regressing to a *pre-critical* position, hence of undoing the very revolution they intend to complete. Kant's own letter of repudiation may be read in this way. But while there is certainly something to the distinction between critical and pre-critical philosophy, what there is to that distinction should be no more clear than what the Kantian revo-

4. For historical details, see Altmann (1973); Beiser (1987); Zammito (1992).

5. Kant (1900–), B, 12: 370–371 (Declaration concerning Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, 7 August 1799).

lution amounts to—and that is exactly the bone of contention. In particular, it should not be assumed that the emergence within German idealism of some element of Kant's pre-1781 philosophy is a symptom that the revolution is coming undone. In fact, as I will show in this chapter, elements of Kant's pre-1781 philosophy reemerge *within the development of Kant's own post-1781 thinking*, and it is an open question whether such elements should be discarded or preserved in some revolutionized form. Indeed, as I will show in the next chapter, Kant's assessment of the adequacy of the transcendental idealism he is developing requires him to continue asking himself what he would now think if he were still pursuing his pre-critical project. Only then can he be sure that his philosophy is preferable to the best possible version of the transcendental realism that is its rival.

Yet a third complication should be acknowledged. Contemporary interpretations of Kant and German idealism tend, understandably enough, to be motivated by the problems that press contemporary philosophy. Many discussions assume without argument that a desirable philosophical position should be "nonmetaphysical"—certainly in the sense of eschewing ontological commitment to any supernatural entity, and perhaps in the additional sense of eschewing any ontological commitment whatsoever, restricting itself to the exploration of "our conceptual scheme."⁶ The warrant for this assumption is presumably that it would be uncharitable to ascribe a position that contemporary naturalist philosophers would reject out of hand to a philosopher with whom one sympathizes. Thus one finds that those who sympathize with Kant seek either to isolate a "nonmetaphysical" strand within his philosophy or else to interpret his philosophy in its entirety as "nonmetaphysical," whereas those who sympathize with

6. This assumption is shared by three groups of contemporary philosophers. First, there are those like P. F. Strawson, Paul Guyer, and Béatrice Longuenesse, who think that we should discard a metaphysical strand of Kant's philosophy while retaining a nonmetaphysical strand. See Strawson (1966), Guyer (1987), and Longuenesse (2000). Second, there are those like Henry Allison and, perhaps, Graham Bird who think that Kant's philosophy in its totality may be interpreted nonmetaphysically. See Allison (1983), (1990), and (2001); and Bird (1962). Third, there are those like John McDowell, Robert Pippin, and Allen Wood, who think that an adequate reconstruction of the nonmetaphysical in Kant's philosophy is best accomplished through the reconstruction of—or, at least, serious engagement with—some version of German idealism. See McDowell (1994); Pippin (1982), (1989), (1991), and (1997); Wood (1991) and (2000). Opposed to all three groups are those who, like Karl Ameriks and James Van Cleve, sympathize with Kant's philosophy under an avowedly metaphysical interpretation. See Ameriks (1982) and Van Cleve (1999).

German idealism tend to interpret Kant's philosophy as containing a "metaphysical" residue that is best eliminated by the endorsement of German idealism, interpreted as "nonmetaphysical."⁷ However, I do not wish to assume that the problems pressing contemporary naturalists are the problems confronting either Kant or the German idealists. In what follows, I will not avoid questions about whether Kant and the German idealists *turn out*, in some sense, to be metaphysicians; I will consider these questions in some detail in the conclusion to this book. But I will *begin* from the problems that I take to motivate *them*. Although these may not lie at the heart of contemporary concerns, I will do my best to relate them to—and also to distinguish them from—contemporary analogues.

1.2

German idealists seek to complete Kant's revolution through a program of systematization. They are committed to Derivation Monism: the view that, in an adequate philosophical system, the *a priori* conditions of experience must somehow be derived from a single, absolute first principle. Such a program is often said to be incompatible with Kant's own understanding of his revolution, specifically with the dualisms said to be fundamental to his critical philosophy. But I am going to argue that Derivation Monism and the core of Kantian dualism are responses to a shared set of problems, and that, under an important restriction, Derivation Monism is compatible with Kantian dualism and is even suggested, at a certain stage of his development after 1781, by Kant himself.

To understand the problems to which both Kantian dualism and German idealist Derivation Monism are responses, it is helpful to begin with a set of issues that is at once both ancient and contemporary: the issues raised by Agrippan skepticism.⁸ Suppose you are asked to respond to a why-

7. See Conclusion below.

8. See Diogenes Laertius (1925), book 9, 88. For discussion, see Westphal (1989a), 13–14, Fogelin (1994), Williams (1996), and Williams (2001). See also Stern (2000) on what he calls "justificatory skepticism." Agrippa is associated with five modes: discrepancy, infinite regress, relativity, hypothesis, and circularity. However, we may distinguish, as Fogelin (1994), 116, does, between the two modes that "trigger a demand for justification by revealing that there are competing claims concerning the nature of the world we perceive"—namely, discrepancy and relativity—and the three modes whose task "is to show that it is impossible to complete this reasoning process in a satisfactory way." These three modes give rise to the Agrippan trilemma.

question. For any answer you give, the Agrippan skeptic undertakes to show that it is either a brute assertion that itself lacks justification, or a justification that raises a further why-question, or a justification that presupposes what it is supposed to establish. If this can be done, then any response you give to the why-question will either terminate arbitrarily, or lead to an infinite regress, or move in a circle.⁹ Collectively, these three alternatives constitute what is known as the Agrippan trilemma.¹⁰

Here are three possible responses to the trilemma:

1. You have failed to answer the question until you manage to answer the why-question in a way that falls into none of the three options. Unless that happens, there is no reason to assume that you have given any justification whatsoever, and indeed there is no reason to assume that any justification whatsoever is available.
2. In at least *some* cases, there *must* be an answer to the question that falls into none of the three options, even if you have not yet succeeded in giving it. For if there is no reason to assume that justifications are sometimes available, then there is no reason for anything.
3. Even if you answer the question in a way that falls into one of the three options, your answer may still be satisfying. The two previous responses assume that no adequate justification can be, without further reason, infinitely regressive or circular. But this assumption is mistaken. The fact that some line of response to a why-question is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma does not mean that it is an inadequate line of response, and it provides no ground for skepticism.

The Agrippan trilemma is often discussed as if it were an exclusively *epistemological* topic. Thus foundationalist epistemologies are cited as examples of the second response and coherentist epistemologies as examples of the third. But in fact the trilemma can arise whenever what is at stake is the nature of reasons, which need not only be reasons why someone believes something, but may also be reasons why someone should do some-

9. As Fogelin (1994), 114, notes, many philosophers speak as though only avoidance of a viciously infinite regress is at stake, thus underdescribing and perhaps underestimating the problem. In what follows, I will take of the avoidance of a viciously infinite regress to indicate that the full Agrippan trilemma underlies the discussion.

10. For a dispute about whether the ancient skeptic intends to challenge only philosophical knowledge-claims or also ordinary knowledge-claims, see Barnes (1997) and Frede, "The Skeptic's Beliefs" in Burnyeat and Frede (eds.) (1997), 179–200. See also Fogelin (1994), 5–9.

thing, or reasons why something is the something it is.¹¹ When I want to be neutral between epistemic, practical and ontic reasons, I will speak of *grounds*. Let us say, then, that the first and second responses agree that a genuine grounding must terminate in an absolute ground. However, while the first response sees the failure to produce an absolute ground as motivating one to doubt, the second response sees that failure as a challenge that must, in some cases, be capable of being met. Meanwhile, the third response rejects the view that genuine grounding must terminate in an absolute ground. On this view, genuine groundings may be ungrounded or infinitely regressive or circular, or some subset of the above.

Both Derivation Monism and Kantian dualism are fundamentally responses to a problem thematized by Leibniz, who made it central to

11. Many will wish to resist this extension of the skeptical problematic on the basis of a fundamental distinction between the epistemic and the ontic, or between the mental and the physical. See, for example, Davidson (2001), 215: "It is here that the irreducible difference between mental concepts and physical concepts begins to emerge: the former, at least insofar as they are intentional in nature, require the interpreter to consider how best to render the creature being interpreted intelligible, that is, as a creature endowed with reason. As a consequence, an interpreter must separate meaning from opinion partly on normative grounds by deciding what, from his point of view, maximizes intelligibility. In this endeavor the interpreter has, of course, no other standards of rationality to fall back on but his own. When we try to interpret the world as physicists, we necessarily employ our own norms, but we do not aim to discover rationality in the phenomena."

It is widely acknowledged, however, that knowledge requires not only that one's beliefs be true, but that they be truth-tracking; and it is surely a sufficient—if not a necessary—condition for truth-tracking that the subject's reasons for belief involve insight into the reasons why the object is as it is. If so, then there can—or must—be a motivation for Agrippan skepticism about the reasons why the object is as it is, matching the motivation for skepticism about the reasons the subject believes as she does.

A Kantian or post-Kantian has an additional reason for regarding the Agrippan trilemma as more than a merely epistemological problem. For one expression of Kant's Copernican revolution is the identity of the *a priori* conditions of knowledge with the *a priori* conditions of being an object of knowledge. In the following paragraphs from an early essay in Schelling (1856–1861), VI PP, I/1: 162, the problem and the third response are expressed first epistemologically, then ontologically: "Either our knowledge has no reality at all and must be an eternal round of propositions, each dissolving in its opposite, a chaos in which no element can crystallize—or there must be an ultimate point of reality on which everything depends, from which all firmness and all form of our knowledge springs, a point which sunders the elements, and which circumscribes for each of them the circle of its continuous effect in the universe of knowledge."

There must be something in which and through which everything that is reaches existence, everything that is being thought reaches reality, and thought itself reaches the form of unity and immovability. This something . . . should be what completes all insights within the whole system of human knowledge, and it should reign—in the entire cosmos of our knowledge—as original ground of all reality."

Thanks to Robert Stern for raising this issue.

eighteenth-century German philosophy. The problem arises from the combination of two demands. First, there is the *Monistic Demand*. This is the demand that every genuine grounding participate in a single systematic unity of grounds, terminating in a single absolute ground. This is an expression of the second response to the Agrippan trilemma. Second, there is the *Dualistic Demand* that physical grounding and metaphysical grounding be kept rigorously separate. What motivates this demand is the thought that the evident promise of modern physical explanation depends on the assumption of necessary physical laws governing all natural phenomena. This assumption entails the explanatory closure of physics: physical phenomena are not to be explained in terms of nonphysical factors, causes that are not bound by physical laws.

The two demands can be seen to be in apparent conflict once the following observation, which may be justified in a variety of ways, is added: physical explanations *do not* and indeed *cannot* terminate in an absolute ground. Physical laws and the fundamental properties of matter they articulate are not plausible candidates for absoluteness. This observation entails that physical grounding, considered on its own, is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma. In contrast, metaphysical grounding may be conceived as escaping—in the Leibnizian tradition, is conceived *in order* to escape—the Agrippan trilemma. Thus properties are grounded in substances, conceived as property-bearers that are not themselves borne by anything else, and substances are in turn grounded in God, who is their absolute ground. The Monistic Demand would seem, then, to amount to a demand that physical phenomena be grounded in metaphysical substances and ultimately in God. However, neither metaphysical substances nor God may be introduced as the grounds of physical phenomena. For this would contradict the closure of physical explanation, hence the Dualistic Demand.

The problem, then, is to find a way to satisfy both demands simultaneously. How can explanations that cannot themselves terminate in an absolute ground, nevertheless be genuine groundings, on the assumption that genuine groundings must terminate in an absolute ground? How can physics be kept rigorously separate from metaphysics, while being grounded in it?¹²

12. For an early example of Leibniz's concern with this problem, see his *Confession of Nature against Atheists*, Leibniz (1969), 110–111: "At the beginning I readily admitted that we must agree with those contemporary philosophers who have revived Democritus and Epicurus and whom

Leibniz's response to this problem is what I will call Derivability Monism: the explanatory conditions to which modern physics appeals—namely, the primary properties of matter—must be *in principle derivable* from a set of metaphysical conditions—namely, the intrinsic properties of the substances whose coexistence constitutes the best of all possible worlds—that are grounded in an absolute first principle—namely, God, who is infinite in His knowledge, wisdom, and power. Thus physical phenomena are grounded in physical conditions, and no metaphysical condition is introduced to explain those phenomena, in accordance with the Dualistic Demand. However, the Monistic Demand is simultaneously to be met through the derivability of physical conditions from metaphysical conditions, which is not a straightforward continuation of physical grounding beyond the physical. It will of course be crucial to say more about what derivability could amount to.

Now, Leibniz explores many variants of this response, and each variant is open to multiple interpretations. Without entering the thicket of Leibniz interpretation—for Kant and German idealism are thorny enough!—I want here to give one further articulation of Leibniz's Derivability Monism, which I find particularly helpful for the illumination of Kant and German idealism. On this articulation, the explanatory conditions appealed to in modern physics involve relational properties. But only nonrelational or monadic properties can be derivable from an absolute first principle.

Robert Boyle aptly calls corpuscular philosophers . . . that in explaining corporeal phenomena, we must not unnecessarily resort to God or to any other incorporeal thing, form, or quality (*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit*) but that so far as can be done, everything should be derived from the nature of body and its primary qualities—magnitude, figure, and motion. But what if I should demonstrate that the origin of these very primary qualities themselves cannot be found in the essence of body? Then indeed, I hope, these naturalists will admit that body is not self-sufficient and cannot subsist without an incorporeal principle . . . a body has the same magnitude and figure as the space it fills. But there remains a doubt as to why it fills this much space and this particular space rather than another. . . . This cannot be explained by the nature of bodies themselves, since the same matter is indeterminate as to any definite figure, whether square or round. Therefore only two replies are possible. Either the body in question must be assumed to have been square from all eternity, or it has been made square by the impact of another body. . . . If you say it has been square from all eternity, you give no reason for it. . . . But, if you say that it was made square by the motion of another body, there remains the question of why it should have had any determinate figure before such motion acted upon it. And if you refer the reason for this, in turn to the motion of another body as cause, and so to infinity, each of your replies will again be followed by a question through all infinity, and it will become apparent that this basis for asking about the reason for each reason will never be removed, so that no full reason [*plena ratio*] will ever be given." For helpful discussion, see Mercer (2002), 70–82.

What is a relational property, and what does Leibniz think is problematic about them? As a first approximation, a relational property is one whose instantiation requires the existence of more than one subject, whereas a monadic property is one whose instantiation requires the existence of only one subject. Thus, to say that Socrates is wiser than Gorgias is not to ascribe a relational property to either Socrates or Gorgias. It is rather to ascribe the monadic property of wisdom to both Socrates and Gorgias, and to compare the degrees to which they possess that property. To say, however, that the sun and the earth are a certain distance apart, and that one exerts a certain force upon the other, is to ascribe to both of those bodies properties that are relational and are not equivalent to any conjunction or comparison of monadic properties. To see what is problematic, consider the question: what is the ground of a relational property? It cannot be either the nature of one subject or the nature of the other. For neither is sufficient on its own. But if you say that the ground consists in the natures of both subjects, as well as the fact that they are in relation to one another, then your explanation is circular. For the fact that they are in relation to one another is just what you were trying to explain.

On the Leibnizian view in which I am interested here, (1) to ascribe to some subject *x* the relational property "stands in relation *R* to *y*" is to presuppose that there is some substance that represents itself as standing in the relation *R* to *y*; and (2), necessarily, if there is some substance that represents itself as standing in the relation *R* to *y*, then there is some substance that represents itself as being such that *x* stands in relation *R* to it.

With respect to the first clause, I note first that, on this view, to say that *x* represents some fact is to ascribe to *x* a monadic property. This is what contemporary philosophers sometimes call an internalist view of representational content. Second, I am here using the phrase "*x* represents itself as standing in the relation *R* to *y*" in such a way that there is no guarantee that *x* is capable of self-consciously ascribing any representation to itself. In Leibniz's terminology, not every perceiver need be an apperceiver. In addition, if *x* is capable of self-consciously ascribing any representation to itself, there is no guarantee that it will be right about how it thinks it represents itself. So it is possible that, although some substance represents itself as standing in the relation *R* to *y*, no substance correctly ascribes to itself the representation of itself as standing in the relation *R* to *y*.¹³

13. See Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1999).

With respect to the second clause, it is crucial that the necessity mentioned in the second clause is not what Leibniz calls *absolute necessity*, but rather what he calls *hypothetical necessity*.¹⁴ Absolute necessity pertains to eternal truths, which subsist in the divine intellect, independently of the divine will. Thus the relationship between the nature or complete concept of a substance and all monadic properties instantiated by that substance is a matter of absolute necessity, although it is not absolutely necessary that any substance be actualized. Hypothetical necessity, in contrast, depends on the divine will, which, though all-powerful, is always guided by the divine and all-beneficent wisdom. God *could* create a world in which one substance represents itself as standing in relation *R* to *y*, but there is no substance that represents itself as such that *x* stands in relation *R* to it. But God *would* not create such a world, for His will determines itself to actualize the best of all possible worlds, and the best of all possible worlds is maximally harmonious. Thus the necessity with which each substance's representations of relational property instantiations match the representations of every other substance is not absolute but hypothetical, dependent on the divine will. This is what Leibniz calls *pre-established harmony*: God chooses to actualize, in His creative act, exactly the set of possible substances whose representations harmonize maximally with one another.

Important consequences follow from this last point. In principle, all relational property instantiations are *derivable* from monadic properties of substances, which are in turn grounded in God as their absolute ground. But in fact, only God could *perform* such a derivation, for He alone knows what substances represent in virtue of their complete concepts. Still, all we need to know, in order to escape Agrippan skepticism, is that the derivation is in principle available. At the same time, however, the monadic properties of substances do not *determine* relational property instantiations. Instead, God makes it the case that there is no variation in relational properties without some appropriate variation in monadic properties. So the relationship between relational properties and monadic properties is co-variance grounded in a third factor: the harmonizing will of God. Some contemporary philosophers would hesitate even to call this supervenience.¹⁵

I will add one more complication to the Leibnizian picture because it is of special importance for the story about Kant towards which I am making

14. See, for example, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, para. 13, in Leibniz (1969), 310.

15. See Kim (1993), 142–149.

my way. So far, I have distinguished two levels: the physical and the metaphysical. Leibniz calls that which occurs at the physical level "well-founded phenomena." For, although only what is on the metaphysical level—God and the substances with their monadic properties—is truly real, what occurs on the physical level is not an illusion, but rather a derivative manifestation of the real. In Leibniz's late writings, however, he introduces a third level: *the ideal*. Space and time are, he argues, neither real nor phenomenal but ideal. This is because space and time are neither substances nor monadic properties, nor are they relational properties. Space and time are *orders of relations*. In Leibniz's view, they are nothing more than imaginary constructions that enable us, with our finite minds, to represent relational property instantiations, thus to represent in a confused way the harmoniousness of the world. Thus space and time lack reality—even derivative reality—altogether.¹⁶

Leibniz's way of maintaining both the Monistic Thesis and the Dualistic Thesis is strikingly elegant. On the one hand, it seems correct to say that, on this view, there are, at the metaphysical level, no relational property instantiations at all, only monadic property instantiations. Yet pre-established harmony entitles us to speak just as if there were relational property instantiations.¹⁷ On the other hand, the supposition of God's will-to-harmony safeguards the closure of physical explanation. For God Himself decrees in His creative act that the world will operate just as if there were relational property instantiations, and indeed just as if there were physical laws governing those instantiations. So, although any true claim to the effect that some relational property is instantiated will be *ultimately* grounded in an absolute ground, it would be wrong to bypass the physical laws and to ground such a claim directly in a special act of divine will. Thus, to say that the reason why the sun and the earth are a certain distance from one another is that God so wills it, while true, would be no substitute for physical explanation. Physical explanation in terms of relational properties constitutes a closed system. Yet physical explanation is grounded in metaphysical explanation and, ultimately, in theology. Without metaphysical and theological foundations, physical explanation would be vulnerable to Agrippan skepticism. Thus Leibniz can maintain at once *both* that physics and metaphysics are genuinely distinct disciplines *and* that

16. See Cover and Hartz (1994).

17. See Earman (1977).

metaphysics deals with reality, whereas physics deals with the merely phenomenal manifestation of that reality. Leibniz can acknowledge the *duality* of physical and metaphysical grounding, while at the same time affirming the *monistic* view that there is, from the metaphysical point of view that only God can fully occupy, only one series of grounds, which terminates in the absolute intellect, wisdom, and will of God.

1.3

Notwithstanding the elegance of Leibniz's solution, it is never straightforwardly an option for Kant, even at his most Leibnizian, early in his career. For Kant assumes from the outset that Leibnizian physics has been surpassed by Newton's. However, Newtonianism also has its difficulties. Only hints are to be found in the Newtonian corpus about how to respond to the problem of Agrippan skepticism, and these hints are deeply troubling to anyone who, like Kant, follows Leibniz in taking that problem, as well as the integrity of physics, seriously.

Two types of trouble may be distinguished, on what Leibnizians would regard as the physical and metaphysical levels. On the physical level, the trouble concerns the notion of force. Both Leibniz and Newton see that physics cannot be purely mechanical but can also be dynamic. This shared insight, arising in both cases from a critical encounter with Cartesianism, leads them in radically different directions. As I have said, Leibniz is committed to the closure of physical grounding but is simultaneously committed to its derivativeness from metaphysical grounding, which terminates in an absolute ground. To be sure, only God could carry out the derivations in detail. Hence only God could construct the system whose possibility is demanded by Derivability Monism. But if we, who are incapable of constructing the system, are nevertheless to be saved from Agrippan skepticism, then we must be capable of grasping the *constructibility* of the system. Our grasp of the constructibility of the system is twofold. On the one hand, we have a *progressive* grasp that starts from the metaphysical foundations and tends, as it were, forward towards the physical phenomena. Thus we grasp *a priori* the existence of God and certain principles of His activity, as well as the existence of created substances and certain principles of their activity. On the other hand, we have a *regressive* grasp that starts from the phenomena and tends, as it were, backward towards their metaphysical foundations. We cannot regress to these foundations in, as it were, an

uninterrupted line, for that would contradict the closure of the physical. But we can find the place where the physical shows its lack of self-sufficiency, and we can find the place where the metaphysical promises to fill that lack. In particular, the basic notion of Leibniz's mature dynamics is what he calls "derivative force," which points backwards to the metaphysical notion of "primitive force."¹⁸ Certainly "derivative force" is relational and is not equivalent to any monadic predicate directly ascribable to a metaphysical substance. Thus, although it plays a fundamental role in the explanation of physical phenomena, "derivative force" is, like any relational property instantiation, insufficient to explain itself. It is a mere "modification," yet physics cannot tell us what it is a modification of. However, "derivative force" is fundamentally *asymmetric*: it is exerted by an active body upon a passive body. This asymmetry indicates that, although "derivative force" is manifest only in physical interactions, it is grounded in a monadic "primitive force" that pertains to the metaphysical substance manifesting its activity through the activity of the active body.

Within the mature Newtonian dynamics of *Principia Mathematica*, force is equally fundamental but is conceived of in an incompatible and radically new way. In particular, gravitational force relations are conceived of as symmetric and reciprocal. To be sure, we may speak of agents and patients for the sake of convenience. But in reality, every body is equally both agent and patient, since each part of matter exerts gravitational force upon every other and has force exerted upon it by every other.¹⁹ In the absence of asymmetry, force no longer points backwards to the metaphysical foundations of physics. Kant's recognition of the innovative character of Newton's conception of force and of the resulting incompatibility between Leibnizianism and Newtonianism plays a central role in his thinking: first, in the formulation of his pre-critical project of synthesizing Leibniz and Newton; later, in the idea that dynamic community is a categorial concept and, indeed, as we shall see shortly, in the formulation of transcendental idealism.

Would Newton nevertheless acknowledge the derivative status of grav-

18. See Leibniz, *Specimen Dynamicum*, in Leibniz (1969), 436–437, and the letter to de Volder, 21, January 1704, in Leibniz (1969), 533–535.

19. Stein (2002), 287–288, translates and emphasizes the significance of the following passage from Newton (1728), 24–26: "One body may be considered as attracting, another as attracted; but this distinction is more mathematical than natural. The attraction really is of each body towards the other, and is thus of the same kind in each."

itational force? With this question, we move to the metaphysical level. Newton is notoriously cagey about the foundations of physics, especially in his published writings. As we shall see, there is some reason, from a Leibnizian point of view, to worry about whether there could be genuinely metaphysical foundations of Newtonian physics. Yet, it does seem that, like Leibniz, Newton cannot accept the idea that physical force is primitive.²⁰ If Newton's views are put into the framework of a response to the Agrippan trilemma, then it seems that Newton must join Leibniz in giving the second response: brute facts, infinite regresses and circles cannot be the whole story; there must be genuine groundings, which terminate in an absolute ground. Gravitational force must, then, be derivative, because it would otherwise constitute a brute fact.

Newton's conception of the absolute ground differs radically from that of Leibniz. While, in Leibniz's view, the divine will must play a role subordinate to the roles of divine intellect and divine wisdom, Newton privileges divine will: he regards God primarily as the *pantokrator*, "the one who exercises dominion over all" through the supremacy of His will.²¹ Thus, Newtonians like Samuel Clarke reject the idea of hypothetical necessity, which they see as restricting the exercise of divine will.²²

From a Leibnizian point of view, however, this rejection is disastrous because it is precisely the idea of hypothetical necessity that grounds the

20. He never says that gravity requires no explanation, but rather that his ability to explain phenomena in terms of gravity does not depend on his ability to explain gravity. In his 1712 letter to Nicolas Hartsoecker, where he protests against Leibniz's charge that Newtonian gravity is an occult quality, Newton says: "So then gravity & hardness go for unreasonable occult qualities unless they can be explained mechanically. And why may not the same be said of the *vis inertiae* & the extension, the duration & the mobility of bodies & yet no man ever attempted to explain those qualities mechanically, or took them for miracles or supernatural things or fictions or occult qualities. They are the natural, real, reasonable manifest qualities of all bodies seated in them by the will of God from the beginning of creation & perfectly incapable of being explained mechanically, & so may the hardness of primitive particles of bodies. And therefore if any man should say that bodies attract one another by a power whose cause is unknown to us or by a power seated in the frame of nature by the will of God, or by a power seated in (an immaterial) a substance in wch bodies move & flote without resistance & which has therefore no *vis inertiae*, but acts by other laws than those that are mechanical, I know not why he should be said to introduce miracles & occult qualities & fictions into the world. For Mr. Leibnitz himself will scarce say that thinking is mechanical as it must be if to explain it otherwise be to make it a miracle, an occult quality & a fiction." The letter is cited by McGuire (1995), 236–237, from U.L.C. Add. 3965.17, fol. 257r–v unpublished.

21. See the *General Scholium* in Newton (1999) and Leibniz and Clarke (2000), C1.4.

22. See Leibniz and Clarke (2000), C5.1–20.

explanatory closure of physics. Once the divine will may be invoked, not as the ground of the natural order which, once actualized, is law-governed, but as the ground of particular events, what will become of the very notion of physical law? The physicist who runs out of ingenuity may simply invoke the divine will. Indeed, Newton seems to do just that in his correspondence with Richard Bentley, where Newton suggests that the inability of physics to explain every feature of the universe, and the consequent need to invoke the divine will—for example, to explain the formation of the solar system—counts as proof of God's existence.²³ Moreover, on at least one occasion, Newton publicly envisages a direct invocation of the divine will as the ground of gravitational force. To Leibniz, this is not merely an *ad hoc* explanation. It is a transgression of the boundary between the physical and the metaphysical, hence a threat to the integrity of physics. Kant seems to have shared this Leibnizian response. Indeed, his major contribution to physics is arguably his attempt to show that, despite what Newton had written to Bentley, the formation of the solar system can be explained by means of Newtonian forces alone.²⁴

Indeed, the Newtonian transgression of the boundary between the physical and the metaphysical endangers metaphysics no less than physics. In the theology of dominion at which Newton's published work only hints, Leibniz rightly sees a threat to the absoluteness of God. In Newton's view, infinite space is the domain within which infinite divine dominion is exercised. When, in unpublished thoughts, Newton considers the possibility that the divine will is the ground of gravitational force, his idea seems to be that divine omnipresence underlies the universality of a force that does not require contact. It follows from Newton's view that the existence of infinite space is a necessary condition for the exercise of divine dominion. But then what makes it the case that God's existence is the absolute ground of the existence of space, rather than it being the case that the existence of infinite space is the ground of the existence of God? The difficulty is not merely that Newton's theology is unorthodox—although it certainly is. Rather, the difficulty is that it is unclear how Newton's theology can play the role required for an adequate response to Agrippan skepticism, a response in which God is the ultimate and absolute ground. Kant also accepts this Leibnizian criticism of Newton. Consequently, a centerpiece of his pre-

23. Newton (2004), 94–95.

24. See n. 20 and Kant (1900–), 1: 215–368.

critical project is a new *a priori* demonstration of God as existent, absolute ground. Like Newton, Kant rejects the ontological proof of God's existence developed by Anselm and revived by Descartes.²⁵ But, like Leibniz, Kant cannot rely, as Newton does, on a regressive argument from particular failures of physical explanation, because he seeks to safeguard both the integrity of physics and the absoluteness of God.

Kant's pre-critical project is based on an ingenious idea about how to be a Newtonian while giving a Derivability Monist response to Agrippan skepticism. The idea, as I understand it, is to preserve an approximately Leibnizian account of what is absolutely necessary, while developing a new account of what is hypothetically necessary that can serve as the basis for Newtonian physics. Thus Kant's central point is that, while God indeed wills the maximally harmonious world, that world consists, not of a pre-established harmony between substances that do not interact with one another, but rather of a harmony between substances that are continually and reciprocally interactive.²⁶ In short, although there is no substantial interaction in virtue of absolute necessity, there is a dynamic community among substances in virtue of hypothetical necessity. Thus Kant restores the human ability to grasp the systematic derivations which God alone can carry out. On the one hand, Kant provides a progressive demonstration of the existence of God as absolute ground of substances with monadic properties, all of which is a matter of absolute necessity. On the other hand, he shows that Newtonian physics, with its fundamental notion of a dynamic community, points backwards to its foundation in the harmonious community of these metaphysical substances, which is a matter of hypothetical necessity. Through these two moves, Kant seems to have shown how to be a Newtonian in physics, while maintaining the Leibnizian duality of physics and metaphysics. He also preserves the Leibnizian idea that, although physical grounding is both closed and vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma, it is nevertheless comprised within a single system, along with metaphysical grounding, which terminates in an absolute first principle.

25. Kant (1900–), EMB, 2: 156–157.

26. Recent studies of Kant's pre-critical philosophy have tended to emphasize that—within the options listed by Leibniz as physical influx, occasionalist and harmonistic accounts of intersubstantial causation—Kant offers a physical influx theory. See, for example, Laywine (1994) and Schönfeld (2000). This is true, if one wants to thus classify every account that allows genuine interaction, and Kant himself sometimes speaks in this way. But it is crucial to see that his description of his account as harmonistic is not merely rhetorical.

1.4

As Kant himself comes to realize, his pre-critical synthesis of Leibnizianism and Newtonianism has serious problems. This realization provides part of the motivation for his Copernican revolution. I will argue, however, that Kant continues throughout to respond to the Leibnizian problem of simultaneously satisfying both the Dualistic Demand and the Monistic Demand.

As I have said, Kant restores the regressive linkage between Newtonian physics and its metaphysical foundations by developing a Newtonian account of hypothetical necessity that neither Leibniz nor Newton ever envisaged. However, as he himself comes to realize, the constructibility of the system of grounds—our ability, not to perform, but at least to grasp the possibility of the derivation—remains problematic. For there remains an unbridgeable gap between the metaphysical substances with their monadic predicates posited at the metaphysical level of absolute necessity and the reciprocally interactive community of those substances posited at the metaphysical level of hypothetical necessity. Under the influence of Newton's conception of inherent force as inertial, Kant regards substances at the level of absolute necessity as wholly inactive. Without interaction, he argues, in a way quite foreign to Leibniz, substances would be static. Only as a matter of hypothetical necessity do substances change. But now it is impossible to grasp the possibility of change—hence the derivability of physical events—from the complete concepts of substances. Indeed, although Kant continues to posit the monadic properties that comprise complete concepts, and although he posits what he calls physical monads which express substances at the physical level, for he continues to affirm with Leibniz that relational properties can only be instantiated by substances that have nonrelational properties, these nonrelational properties have no other role whatsoever. They satisfy a necessary condition for substantial existence, but they make no grounding contribution whatsoever. It is mysterious what they could be, since, unlike Leibniz, Kant appears to take an externalist view of representations. In Kant's pre-critical project, monadic properties play the role of prime matter, inheriting its status as an enigma.

To see the difficulty, let us again consider Leibniz's pre-established harmony. On this view, the monadic properties of substances are principles of activity which make a crucial grounding contribution. To imagine the possibility of grasping the complete concepts of substances is at the same

time to imagine the possibility of grasping the pre-established harmony underlying physical law. For what God does, in His act of creation, is to actualize the set of substances whose monadic properties match. Consequently, although there is a distinction between absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity, God performs a single act of creation, and, if we could grasp the complete concepts of substances at the level of absolute necessity, then we could also grasp the set of substances comprising the best possible world. In contrast, on Kant's pre-critical view, the reciprocally relational properties that substances have once they are actualized within the best possible world *cannot* be known on the sole basis of the monadic predicates of those substances. It seems that God must perform two acts of creation: He must actualize a certain set of substances with their monadic predicates, and He must also institute a dynamic community of those substances that gives rise to reciprocally relational properties in no way derivable from monadic properties.

To be sure, Kant says that God performs a single creative act. But this is nothing more than a promissory note that he lacks the resources to redeem. He attains this realization himself in 1764, when he sees that what he calls *real* ground-consequence relations—that is, hypothetically necessary or physical causal relations—cannot be grasped on the basis of what he calls *logical*—that is, absolutely necessary—relations.²⁷ To employ a term Leibniz used in criticism of Locke: Kant's Newtonian metaphysics of community is *superadded* to his Leibnizian metaphysics of substance.²⁸ So Kant has not succeeded in meeting the Monistic Demand.

Nor has he succeeded in meeting the Dualistic Demand. Kant thinks that, unlike Newton, he can avoid the physicalization of theology. Like Newton and Gassendi before him, Kant rejects Descartes' version of the ontological proof of God's existence. But if our knowledge of God's existence were to rest solely on *a posteriori* grounds, we would be unable to resist the temptation to make God part—to be sure, the supreme part, but part nevertheless—of nature. Thus Kant develops his own *a priori* proof, or at least the basis for such a proof, which can alone constrain the analogies

27. This realization is sometimes attributed to Kant's encounter with Hume. But, while this may be true, it is interesting to note that Kant *could* have reached the same insight for reasons internal to his own project.

28. See Locke (1960), book 4, chapter 10, on thinking matter; Locke's remarks on gravity in correspondence with Bishop Stillingfleet in (1976–1989); and Leibniz (1996), 60–65. For helpful discussion of Locke's position, see Wilson (1999).

by which we characterize God. The argument—which, as we shall see, continues to be important after the critical turn and, indeed, continues to be important for the development of German idealism—is, in brief, as follows.

Concepts of things are composed of real determinations—that is, predicates signifying properties capable of composing essences. If concepts of things are to be possible—one might say, if conceptualizable things are to be possible—then real determinations must be available. There must therefore be a stock of available real determinations, the sum-total of whose possible combinations would be the sum-total of possible concepts of things. This stock must be available *prior* to the *actual* existence of anything, for it constitutes the *possibility* of anything, and things are possible before they become actual, if indeed they ever do. However, this *omnitudo realitatis* (sum total of reality), as Kant calls it, is itself merely a stock of *possible thoughts of possible properties* and cannot subsist without some *actual* basis. That basis, Kant argues, must be God, considered as *ens realissimum* (most real being), the unique being from whose real determinations all other real determinations may be derived.²⁹

This demonstration of God's existence as absolute ground enables Kant to avoid the problematic character of Newton's theology, which runs the risk of subjecting God to spatial and ultimately sensible conditions, hence of undermining the absoluteness of God required for an adequate escape from the Agrippan trilemma. But an analogue of the problem emerges in Kant's philosophy of mind, as he himself comes to see. As the Newtonian God is supposed to be omnipresent in space without being a space-filling body, so the pre-critical, Kantian mind is supposed to be omnipresent in the human body without being the body that fills that space. But just as Newton has no way to explain the special, noncorporeal way in which God is supposed to inhabit space, so Kant has no way to explain the special, noncorporeal way in which the mind is supposed to inhabit space.³⁰ Only

29. See Kant (1900–), ND, 1: 395–396, EMB 2: 83–87. In KrV, A571/B599–A583/B661, Kant characterizes the argument as illusory. Later, however—as we shall see—he comes to view it as articulating a necessary demand of reason, which, however, concerns only how we must think, not what must exist. The argument retains its importance for the formation of concepts, if not for the demonstration of their instantiation.

30. See Kant (1900–), TGS, 2: 334–337 for a parody of his own pre-critical Newtonian metaphysics, and TGS, 2: 371–372 for his criticism of this view. See Friedman (1992a) and Laywine (1994).

analogies with the corporeal are available. In the absence of a progressive demonstration of the mind's existence and character, there is no constraint on those analogies. But, in the absence of constraint, analogy may run riot. The mental becomes, not an immaterial but rather a quasimaterial realm in which we are free to postulate quasiphysical forces for the sake of explanation, although sensible phenomena may neither verify nor falsify our postulations. As Kant relates in 1766, he makes the disconcerting discovery that Emanuel Swedenborg, whom he regards as a fanatical visionary, has described a world in which there is a dynamic community of minds, a world to which Kant's pre-critical project might equally lead. The idea of mental community represents an illicit intrusion of the physical into the metaphysical, whereas the idea of a physical monad represents an illegitimate incursion of the metaphysical into the physical. The Duality Demand has not been met.

Kant's response to this realization focuses first on the Duality Demand: he insists on a rigorous separation of the sensible and the intellectual, and he seeks a diagnosis of the fallacies of subreption into which he himself has fallen. The result is the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, with its initial version of the Kantian dualisms between appearances and things in themselves, and between sensibility and understanding.

As we shall see when we consider Kant's mature versions of these dualisms, they are subject to a range of interpretations that vary considerably with respect to their ontological commitments to things in themselves. On the ontologically weakest interpretation, Kant is said to make only nonreferring uses of the phrase "thing in itself," involving no ontological commitments whatsoever. On the ontologically strongest interpretation, Kant is said to use the phrase to refer to entities that exist in some supernatural world where they have their own metaphysical characters about which we can know something, if not much. We may presume that, however one interprets the mature versions of these dualisms, it will be agreed that Kant's 1770 view must be interpreted in the ontologically strongest fashion. Through the faculty of understanding, we know things as they really are in the intelligible or noumenal world, where they constitute a dynamic community. Through the faculty of sensibility, we know things as they appear in the sensible or phenomenal world.

At this stage, much of Kant's mature account of sensibility is already in evidence. Until 1768, Kant has held, along with Leibniz, that space is not phenomenal but merely ideal: an order of relations that serves as a con-

venient means of representation for finite minds who lack an adequate grasp of divine harmony. Indeed, although the details are never fully worked out, Kant has a more promising view in this respect than Leibniz. For space is a whole in which the position of each object is related to the position of each coexistent object, which is structurally similar to the dynamic community that Kant regards as maximally harmonious, but not obviously similar to the pre-established correspondences that Leibniz regards as maximally harmonious. In 1768, however, Kant becomes convinced that, as Newton maintains against Leibniz, space cannot be adequately understood as an order *posterior* to dynamic relations, but must be understood rather as a framework *prior* to dynamic relations.³¹

This does not mean, however, that Kant becomes a Newtonian absolutist, ascribing metaphysical reality to space. In 1770 he argues that, through prior to dynamic relations, space is nevertheless ideal.³² But the priority of space alters the meaning and significance of the term *ideal*. For Kant no longer distinguishes, like Leibniz, between the phenomenality of the physical and the ideality of the spatial. Instead, the physical is, as such, spatial and hence ideal. At the same time, space is no longer derivable from anything real to which it is posterior, not even from the derivative reality of physical force. Thus space is "subjective," a form that cannot be presumed to have any import beyond its necessity for our human sensibility.³³ And thus Kant accords to space and to the sensible objects that inhabit it a status less even than the derivative reality of Leibnizian phenomena.

Although sensibility enables mathematical and physical knowledge of phenomena or "things as they appear," the understanding, according to Kant's *Dissertation*, yields metaphysical knowledge of noumena or "things as they are."³⁴ And things turn out to be just as Kant's earlier account of hypothetically necessary harmony,³⁵ inspired by Newtonian physics, says they are: in a dynamic community that is grounded, not in the "existence alone"³⁶—that is, the monadic predicates—of the constituent substances, but rather in their common, divine, and absolute creator.³⁷

31. Kant (1900–), VeG, 2: 382–383.

32. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 403.

33. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 403. Space "is, rather, subjective and ideal."

34. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 392.

35. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 409.

36. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 407 (emphasis deleted).

37. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 408.

Now, there can be no question that Kant is making a sustained effort to meet the Dualistic Demand. Indeed, one might be forgiven for thinking that he has entirely abandoned all hope of simultaneously meeting the Monistic Demand. After all, sensible phenomena inhabit one world, intelligible noumena another, and it is to these distinct worlds that the cognitive faculties of sensibility and understanding are oriented. In what sense, then, could phenomena be said to be ultimately grounded in the absolute ground?

Within the framework established by the Agrippan trilemma, if Kant gives up the Monistic Demand, he must either become an Agrippan skeptic about knowledge of phenomena, or else he must say that such knowledge is genuine *despite* its lack of absolute grounding. But I think that there is evidence that Kant has not adopted either of these positions and that he remains committed to the Monistic Demand.

Indeed, Kant's account of the intelligible world known by the understanding is introduced for the express purpose of grounding the dynamic community of phenomena: "what is the principle upon which this relation of all substances itself rests, and which, when seen intuitively, is called space?"³⁸ It is not enough that we have intuitive knowledge of all-encompassing space as the ground of physical community. We also need to have conceptual knowledge of this ground. In other words, we need to be able to grasp, if not some principle from which space is progressively derivable—for if were derivable then it would retain some degree of objectivity and reality—then at least some principle of which space is a derivative or dependent expression. Even if we cannot grasp the possibility of a progressive derivation of space, we should at least be able to grasp the regressive indication by which space points back to metaphysical reality. In the *Dissertation*, the Monistic Demand is satisfied by a structural analogy between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds: as space is the ground of physical community, so God is the ground of metaphysical community. To be sure, space is not an absolute ground. There is no reason why space is as it is. But space may be regarded as the "phenomenal omnipresence" of God, the derivative expression of the absolute ground.³⁹ And armed with his progressive proof of God's existence, which Kant does not repudiate and at which he hints when he says that "God, as the ideal of perfection,

38. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 407.

39. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 410.

is the principle of cognising,"⁴⁰ there is no danger that God's absoluteness will be compromised by confusion between His virtual presence and the local presence of bodies.⁴¹ It remains the case, then, that physical community is an *appearance* of—and to that extent *dependent* upon—metaphysical community, which has an absolute ground. We might call this, not Derivation Monism, but Dependence Monism.

As a response to the problems afflicting earlier versions of his pre-critical project, the *Dissertation* is not very satisfactory. Kant avoids any intrusion of the metaphysical into the physical that would transgress the Duality Demand. But he does so mainly by refraining from saying anything about the mind and its relation to nature. Meanwhile, he attempts to meet the Monistic Demand by claiming that space, the nonabsolute ground of physical community, is derivative from God, the absolute ground of metaphysical community, where this does not mean that space is progressively derivable from God, but rather that, once one knows the structure of both the phenomenal and noumenal worlds, one will realize that the role of space in the former is suggestive of the role of God in the latter. What remains entirely unclear, however, is how we are supposed to know that the intelligible world is a community of substances. Indeed, no warrant is given for this claim, beyond the fact that metaphysical community would conveniently undergird physical community. As Kant says, echoing his earlier work, community could not be known from the "existence alone" of metaphysical substances, which is presumably still to be understood in a roughly Leibnizian fashion, as involving only monadic properties. But if the only justification for Kant's account of the intelligible world consists in a regression from the sensible world, then he can still be accused of allowing the physical to intrude into the metaphysical. In that sense, the Duality Demand remains unmet.

1.5

Unlike Kant's *Dissertation* account of sensibility, not much of his *Dissertation* account of the understanding survives the revolution and makes its way into the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. As Kant writes to Markus

40. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 396.

41. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 414.

Herz in 1772, the *Dissertation* lacks any account whatsoever of the relationship between the understanding and its objects.⁴² However, the *Dissertation* already contains hints of two central features of the critical account of the understanding. First, when Kant addresses the tricky question of why, given that phenomena are things as they appear but as they are not, “nonetheless cognition of them is in the highest degree true,” he suggests that there are “common laws” according to which the agreements of subject and predicate in judgments of phenomena may be assessed. That is to say, the subjective and ideal realm has its own standards of truth. By 1781, this has become the distinction between two meanings of the contrast between the real and the ideal: space and the physical objects inhabiting it are *transcendentally* ideal but *empirically* real.

Second, Kant hints at an intimacy between sensibility and understanding that must come as a surprise within the dualistic context of the *Dissertation*. Namely, “there is a certain concept which in itself, indeed, belongs to the understanding but of which the actualisation in the concrete requires the auxiliary notions of time and space. . . . This is the concept of *number*.”⁴³ By 1781, this has become a general claim about the pure categories that constitute the heart of Kant’s new account of the understanding: the categories belong to the understanding, but their concrete actualizations are possible only by means of what is given to sensibility in the forms of space and time. The development of the first hint suggests a strengthened tendency towards dualism: the phenomenal has its own standard of reality. But the development of the second suggests a strengthened tendency towards monism: this standard of reality, articulated as a table of categories or corresponding principles, belongs to the understanding, which, however, has no objects of knowledge apart from those that are sensibly given.

Does the strengthened tendency towards dualism suggest an abandonment of the demand for absolute grounding? And does the strengthened tendency towards monism suggest that only physical grounding is of concern, not its relationship to some metaphysical structure of grounding which, it turns out, is not epistemically available to us? If so, then it would seem that Kant’s Copernican revolution involves a move beyond the Leibnizian problem of trying simultaneously to satisfy the Dualistic and the

42. Kant (1900–), B, 10: 130 (To Marcus Herz, 21 February 1772).

43. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 397.

Monistic Demands. If so, then it would seem that Kant now accepts the Agrippan trilemma as the condition of human knowledge, without, however, becoming an Agrippan skeptic.

There is much to recommend such a reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which ascribes to Kant the third response to the Agrippan trilemma: we cannot escape it, but that is no reason for doubt. Certainly, Kant regards empirical knowledge as grounded in the brute and underivable forms of space and time; as incapable of escaping from the circle of dynamic community, in which every object depends for its determinations on every other object, which in turn depend on the first object, and so on; and also as inescapably driven to infinite regress in its causal explanations. And, surely, there is no reason to impute skepticism to a philosopher who insists that the epistemic success of the mathematical and natural sciences may be taken as a "fact" and needs no demonstration, and upon whose genesis he wishes to model his own attempt to set philosophy on the sure path of a science.⁴⁴ If one reads the *Critique* thus, then one will find no overlap whatsoever between its problematic and that of the German idealists, whose Derivation Monism will be judged pre-critical. However, I want to argue that it remains possible to read the *Critique* as a response to the Leibnizian problematic, and even to find versions of Dependence Monism and, within crucial limits, Derivation Monism that survive Kant's Copernican revolution.

Of course, quite different interpretations of that revolution will be given by those who think the critical Kant gives the third response to the Agrippan trilemma and those who think that he gives the second response. Everyone will have to agree to some verbal formulas—say, that our knowledge is of appearances, not things in themselves, and that the standards of reality and truth by which our knowledge is to be assessed come from the forms of our minds, not from the forms of mind-independent substances. But these words alone do not compel us to abandon the thesis that there are things in themselves with an absolute ground, or even the thesis that physical grounding is somehow derivative from metaphysical grounding. I will argue, however, that these theses can only be ascribed to the critical Kant if their meanings undergo revolutionary transformation.

It is in the light of these issues that I want to consider the more familiar questions—more familiar to Kant interpreters—of how to understand

44. Kant (1900–), KrV, B128.

Kant's critical dualism between thing in itself and appearance and, most immediately, of how to understand Kant's critical use of the term *thing in itself*. A range of options have been canvassed, which might be arranged as follows, in order of increasing ontological commitment:

1. *The Two Methods Interpretation*. On this view, Kant speaks of things in themselves nonreferentially and thus without any ontological commitment whatsoever. The point of the distinction between things in themselves and appearances is not to pick out some realm of entities beyond the reach of our knowledge. Instead, the point is to pick out a method for thinking of the very same objects that are accessible to our knowledge, a method for thinking of them as independent of the necessary conditions of our knowledge. But there is nothing metaphysical corresponding to this method of thinking, not even a nonphenomenal aspect of the objects we know. Our knowledge is finite without being confined. There is nothing—no thing—we cannot know.
2. *The Two Aspects Interpretation*. On this view, Kant speaks of things in themselves referentially, but he is referring to a nonphenomenal aspect of the very same objects that are accessible to our knowledge. Thus there is something we cannot know. But this something is not an entity distinct from the entities we can know. Here a further range of options opens up, varying with respect to how much we are entitled to affirm of the nonphenomenal aspect of things. Are we entitled to affirm only that such an aspect exists, or also that it has certain negative characteristics, or even that it has certain positive characteristics?
3. *The Two Existents Interpretation*. On this view, Kant speaks of things in themselves referentially, and he is committed to the existence of entities distinct from the sensible objects of our knowledge. These entities inhabit the intelligible world, which is distinct from the sensible world. Again a further range of options opens up, now varying with respect to how much we are entitled to affirm of things in themselves. Are we entitled to affirm only that such entities exist, or also that they have certain negative characteristics, or perhaps even that they have certain positive characteristics?

The Two Methods Interpretation's total lack of ontological commitment accords well with the idea that Kant accepts the Agrippan trilemma without

skepticism, abandoning the requirement for absolute grounding. For things in themselves cannot supply any such grounding if they do not exist. However, the idea of a method for thinking of things as independent of the conditions necessary for us to know them sounds exceedingly odd. What could be the point of such a method if it does not pick out a way things *are* independently of the conditions necessary for us to know them? To this question, the third and second critiques enable the following responses. First, the idea that physical grounding as derivative from metaphysical grounding plays an indispensable role in science. This is not because it constitutes objects of possible knowledge. Rather, it is because—as Kant argues in the *Critique of Judgment*—it gives us hope that a shared absolute ground renders nature and our cognitive capacities fit for one another, without which hope the pursuit of theoretical knowledge would not seem worthwhile, and because it gives us hope that nature has a unity that is at least a pale reflection of the unity we imagine the metaphysical to have, without which hope we would not find it worthwhile to seek ever greater unity in our scientific explanations. However, the reflective and regulative employments of the method involve no cognitive claim whatsoever, hence no ontological commitment to things in themselves underlying natural phenomena. Second, the method for thinking of things as independent of the conditions necessary for our knowledge of them turns out—as Kant argues in the *Critique of Practical Reason*—to be exactly the right method for practical reasoning, for we have to think of ourselves in this way if we are to act as free agents, capable of morality. However, the practical employment of this method involves no cognitive claim whatsoever, hence no ontological commitment to ourselves as things in themselves.

This thoroughly nonmetaphysical account of Kant's critical philosophy has recently been developed with great subtlety and elegance.⁴⁵ It can account for much that Kant says about things in themselves in all three critiques. However, I do not think that it can account for *everything* Kant says about things in themselves. There are passages that affirm the existence of things in themselves, seeming to acknowledge some ontological commitment. For example, at the end of the first *Critique*'s Analytic, Kant writes: "Doubtless, indeed, there are intelligible entities corresponding to the sensible entities; there may also be intelligible entities to which our sensible faculty of intuition has no relation whatsoever; but our concepts of under-

45. See Bird (1962), Prauss (1974), and Allison (1983), (1990), (1996), (2001), (2004).

standing, being mere forms of thought for our sensible intuition, could not in the least apply to them."⁴⁶ At the end of the first *Critique's* Dialectic, he says: "Thus, if one asks (in respect of a transcendental theology) *first* whether there is anything different from the world which contains the ground of the world order and its connection according to universal laws, then the answer is: *Without a doubt*. For the world is a sum of appearances, and so there has to be some transcendental ground for it, i.e., a ground thinkable merely by the pure understanding."⁴⁷ In the second and third critiques, Kant also speaks of our practical self-understanding—our understanding of agency as independent of the conditions necessary for human knowledge—as a "practical cognition."⁴⁸ If this understanding, along with the moral theology it is supposed to warrant, is wholly without ontological commitment, then Kant should not regard it as cognitive at all.⁴⁹

The proponent of the Two Methods Interpretation may dismiss such passages as residues of Kant's pre-critical past or as signs that even he is not free from the dialectical illusions he diagnoses. For my purposes, however, it is worth exploring what view emerges if one does *not* dismiss these passages, and what affinities such a view might have with German idealism.

Set aside, for the time being, the question of whether the in itself is an aspect of the entities available for our knowledge or whether it is existentially distinct. Can we know of the in itself—as I will say for now, in the service of neutrality—only that it is, or also what it is not, or perhaps even what it is? On this score there is an apparent conflict in Kant's thinking, for which I am going to propose a resolution that I hope will illuminate Kantian dualism.

On the one hand, there are passages that strongly suggest that we can know some positive characteristics of the in itself. Primary among these are texts in which Kant adds an auxiliary consideration to his usual battery of arguments for the transcendental ideality of space.

Everything in our cognition that belongs to intuition . . . contains nothing but mere relations; namely, of places in one intuition (extension), alteration of places (motion), and laws in accordance with which this alteration

46. Kant (1900–), KrV, B309.

47. Kant (1900–), KrV, A696/B725.

48. See, for example, Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 137: "thus there is indeed a cognition of God but only with practical reference"; and KpV, 5: 470, where the existence of God is said to be an object of "pure practical cognition that aims at [our] complying with [our] duties."

49. His view may change in this respect, beginning with the *Religion*. See Förster (2000).

is determined (moving forces). But what is present in the location, or what it produces in the things themselves besides the alteration of place, is not given through these relations. Now through mere relations no thing in itself is cognized; it is therefore right to judge that since nothing is given to us through outer sense except mere representation of relation, outer sense can also contain in its representation only the relation of an object to the subject, and not that which is internal to the object in itself. It is exactly the same in the case of inner sense.⁵⁰

But if, however, I realize (as has been shown in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*) that of corporeal nature we cognize nothing other than space (which is nothing at all existent, but rather merely the condition for locations outside one another, thereby for merely external relations), the thing in space—except for the fact that space is also in it (i.e., it is itself extended)—no effect other than motion (change of location, thereby of mere relations), consequently no force or passive property other than motive force and mobility (alteration of external relations) is given for cognition. . . .⁵¹

Here Kant seems to argue as follows. The in itself must have certain positive characteristics—namely, the in itself must have monadic properties. Anything that is given to us through sensibility can have only relational properties. Therefore, anything that is given to us through sensibility is not the in itself. This argument surely presupposes that the in itself is the substantial ground of relational properties, a ground that must have at least some monadic properties, according to a metaphysical principle inherited from the roughly Leibnizian side of Kant's pre-critical project.⁵²

On the other hand, there are passages that strongly suggest that we cannot know any positive characteristics of the in itself. Consider, for example, this passage from the end of the Dialectic of the first *Critique*, cited above but now given in a longer form:

Thus, if one asks (in respect of a transcendental theology) *first* whether there is anything different from the world which contains the ground of the world order and its connection according to universal laws, then the

50. Kant (1900–), KrV, B67. See also A283/B339: “a persistent appearance in space (impenetrable extension) contains mere relations and nothing absolutely internal”; A285/B341: “whatever we can cognize only in matter is pure relations (that which we call their inner determinations is only comparatively internal).”

51. Kant (1900–), BJPM, 8: 153.

52. See the helpful discussion in Warren (2001), 37–58.

answer is: *Without a doubt*. For the world is a sum of appearances, and so there has to be some transcendental ground for it, i.e., a ground thinkable merely by the pure understanding. If the question is *second* whether this being is substance, of the greatest reality, necessary, etc., then I answer *that this question has no significance at all*. For all the categories through which I attempt to frame a concept of such an object are of none but an empirical use, and they have no sense at all when they are not applied to objects of possible experience, i.e., to the world of sense. Outside this field they are mere titles for concepts, which one might allow, but through which one can also understand nothing.⁵³

Kant is speaking here of God, the absolute ground of the in itself, not of the in itself grounded in God, which is under discussion in the previously cited passage. But if the categories do not have any nonempirical use that could enable us to say that God is substance, then they surely do not have any nonempirical use that could enable us to say that the in itself is substance. The point is also made more generally here:

If after all this discussion anyone still has reservations about denying the categories a merely transcendental use, then he should test them in any synthetic assertion . . . such as: "Everything that is, exists as substance, or a determination dependent on it," "Everything contingent exists as the effect of another thing, namely its cause," etc. Now I ask: Whence will he derive these synthetic propositions, since the concepts are not to hold of possible experience but rather of things in themselves (*noumena*)? Where is the third thing that is always requisite for a synthetic proposition in order to connect with each other concepts that have no logical (analytical) affinity?⁵⁴

What is to be made of this conflict? I propose to resolve it by means of a distinction between two ways in which Kant commits himself to the existence of the in itself. One mode of commitment does not warrant positive characterization, while the other does.

To illustrate the first—which I will call the analytic—mode of commitment, consider the following passages:

We can have cognition of no object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, i.e., as an appearance; from which follows the limitation of all even possible speculative cognition of reason

53. Kant (1900–), KrV, A696/B725.

54. Kant (1900–), KrV, A259/B314–315.

to mere objects of *experience*. Yet the reservation must also be well noted, that even if we cannot *cognize* these same objects as things in themselves, we at least must be able to *think* them as things in themselves. For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears.⁵⁵

But the cause on account of which, not yet satisfied through the substratum of sensibility, one must add *noumena* that only the pure understanding can think to the *phaenomena*, rests solely on this. Sensibility and its field, namely that of appearances, are themselves limited by the understanding, in that they do not pertain to things in themselves, but only to the way in which, on account of our subjective constitution, things appear to us. This was the result of the entire Transcendental Aesthetic, and it also follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word "appearance" must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, if we call certain objects, as appearances, beings of sense (*phaenomena*), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in itself, then it already follows from our concept that to these we as it were oppose, as objects thought merely through the understanding, either other objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, even though we do not intuit it in them, or else other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all, and call these beings of understanding (*noumena*).⁵⁷

Here the central point is analytic: it is a feature of the *concept* of appearance that to apply that concept to some existent is to imply that there is some existent to which applies the concept of the in itself—the concept of a ground of appearance that is in some way independent of the appearance. At most, this analytic thesis could yield what Kant calls a noumenon in the negative sense, and any attempt to characterize it positively would be illicit. For example, it would be fallacious to infer that, because there must be a ground of appearance that is in some way independent of the appearance—

55. Kant (1900–), KrV, Bxxvi–xxvii.

56. Kant (1900–), KrV, A251–252.

57. Kant (1900–), KrV, B306.

that is, independent of relation to the forms of human sensibility—therefore this ground of appearance must be substantial and have some properties that are not only unrelated to the forms of human sensibility but that are wholly nonrelational. Note, however, first, that analytic commitment to the in itself involves commitment to a far from negligible negative characterization: the in itself is not spatial, and is therefore not material.⁵⁸ Second, since this mode of commitment is analytic, it cannot be negated without contradiction or, as Kant puts it, “absurdity.” The analytic mode of commitment, I want to claim, represents what has become of the absolutely necessary level of metaphysics, transformed and emptied of all but existential commitment, but therefore not abolished, by the Copernican revolution.⁵⁹

For the second—which I will call the synthetic—mode of commitment, consider the following passages:

In an object of the pure understanding only that is internal that has no relation (as far as the existence is concerned) to anything that is different from it. The inner determinations of a *substantia phaenomenon* in space, on the contrary, are nothing but relations, and it is entirely a sum total of mere relations.⁶⁰

Substances in general must have something *inner*, which is therefore free of all outer relations, consequently also of composition. The simple is therefore the foundation of the inner in things in themselves.⁶¹

Above we noted limits of reason with respect to all cognition of mere beings of thought; now . . . we can also determine the boundaries of pure reason; for in all boundaries there is something positive (e.g., a surface is the boundary of corporeal space, yet is nonetheless itself a space; a line is a space, which is the boundary of a surface; a point is the boundary of a line, yet is nonetheless a locus in space), where limits contain mere negations. The limits announced . . . are still not enough after we have found that something lies beyond them (although we will never cognize

58. Hence what Ameriks calls “mere immaterialism.” See, for example, the postscript to Ameriks (2000b).

59. One might ask: why use the concept of appearance in the first place? If one did not employ that concept, no commitment to the in itself would be undertaken. Here, I think, Kant would appeal to his primary arguments for transcendental idealism, for example, to the argument from geometry in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*: mathematics could not be applicable to nature in the way that it is, if not for an intimacy between nature and our minds that requires us to regard nature as essentially in relation to us, hence as appearance.

60. Kant (1900–), KrV, A265/B321.

61. Kant (1900–), KrV, A271/B330.

what that something may be in itself). For the question now arises: How does our reason relate to the connection of that with which we are acquainted to that with which we are not acquainted, and never will be? Here is a real connection of the known to the wholly unknown (which it will always remain), and if the unknown should not become the least bit better known—as in fact is not to be hoped—the concept of this connection must still be able to be determined and brought to clarity.

We should, then, think for ourselves an immaterial being, an intelligible world, and a highest of all beings (all noumena), because only in these things, as things in themselves, does reason find completion and satisfaction, which it can never hope to find in the derivation of the appearances from the homogeneous grounds of those appearances; and we should think such things for ourselves because the appearances actually do relate to something distinct from them (and so entirely heterogeneous), in that appearances always presuppose a thing in itself, and so they provide notice of such a thing, whether or not it can be cognized more closely.⁶²

Kant's thinking here may, I believe, be expressed as follows. The requirement that genuine groundings terminate in an absolute is an unavoidable demand of reason. This demand gives rise to certain necessities in the way we conceive the in itself, thus to what may be called a conception of the noumenon in the positive sense. On the one hand, this conception is empty as far as theoretical cognition is concerned. No intuition that is possible for us could enable us to apply the conception to any object, or even to determine whether it is in principle applicable to any object. But a synthetic judgment is *of an object*, involving the application of concepts to that object via some appropriate intuition. So we cannot make the affirmative *judgment*, say, that the in itself is substantial. However we *can* and indeed *must think* that the in itself is substantial. Although empty in the sense of lacking application to an object given in intuition, and therefore falling short of Kant's requirements for a synthetic judgment, this thought has propositional content. And the necessity that links the idea of the in itself with the idea of the substantial—with the idea of a nonrelational ground for relational properties—is not analytic but synthetic *a priori*. If the in itself were not substantial, then there would be no contradiction. But there would be a conflict with reason's demand for grounding that terminates in an absolute. What links the subject and predicate concepts is neither conceptual

62. Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 354–355.

necessity nor intuition, but rather the supposition that there is an escape from the Agrippan trilemma. This supposition is not negligible. We cannot, as rational beings, be satisfied with mere limits of our theoretical cognition, but must determine boundaries. Still, there is a logical possibility that reason's demand could fail to be met. So, to questions about how the in itself is, we cannot answer "Without a doubt," as we can to questions about whether the in itself is. The synthetic mode of commitment, I want to claim, represents what has become of the hypothetically necessary level of metaphysics, transformed and emptied of applicability, but not of meaning and use, by the Copernican revolution.

Thus we find ourselves in the following situation. At the ground of appearances, there must lie the in itself, on pain of logical contradiction. As a matter of absolute necessity, the in itself can be said to exist, but can be given no positive characterization whatsoever, although it can be given certain negative characterizations, since it is not spatial and is therefore not material. However, as a matter of hypothetical necessity—that is, on the supposition that reason's demands are met, which is by definition reasonable—we must think of the in itself as positively meeting reason's demand for absolute grounding. The content of hypothetical necessity may be determined neither progressively from the content of absolute necessity, for the synthetic *a priori* has been thoroughly severed from the analytic, nor regressively from the structure of the empirical world, for the pitfall of subreption must be avoided. Nevertheless, hypothetical necessity has *some* content, however thin, and it remains a matter for speculation to which Kant occasionally returns, throughout the critical period.

Thus Kant may still be seen as responding to the problem that seemed to Leibniz to call for Derivability Monism. For Kant is still responsive to two demands, which are in apparent conflict. The first is the Dualistic Demand for a rigorous separation of the physical and the metaphysical, or the sensible and the intellectual. Although the Copernican revolution leaves little of speculative metaphysics and denies it the status of theoretical cognition, it does—and, in Kant's view, must—leave something. So the Dualistic Demand does not collapse into the demand that the metaphysical be exiled from the foundations of physics. It remains, at the same time, the demand that the physical be rigorously excluded from the metaphysical realm of the in itself. The second is the Monistic Demand that every genuine grounding participate in a single systematic unity of grounds, terminating in a single absolute ground. Although the Copernican revolution evacuates

this conception of systematicity almost entirely, commitment to the intelligible world—to a grounding that is ultimately absolute—survives.

How should the resulting Kantian dualism of the in itself and the appearance be characterized? The Two Methods Interpretation, I contend, cannot account for either the analytic or the synthetic mode of commitment to the in itself. Which, then, is to be preferred: the Two Aspects or the Two Existents view?

Neither. The correct view would be more accurately called the Two Essences view.⁶³ Properly understood, it renders the question “Two aspects or two existents?” unaskable.

To understand the Two Essences view, we need to consider one of the major innovations of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical. This innovation, hinted at but not developed in the *Dissertation*, gives the Copernican revolution another formulation: appearances, which are the sole objects of our theoretical cognition, are transcendently ideal, yet empirically real. In contrast, the in itself is transcendently real.⁶⁴ But what is the import of these terms?

Let us first consider the contrast between the transcendental and the empirical. There are two applications of the contrast. The first picks out two kinds of cognition:

I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our {A: *a priori* concepts of objects} {B: modes of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*}. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy.⁶⁵

Here the contrast is between transcendental and empirical cognition. Empirical cognition—or, equivalently, experience—is theoretical cognition of

63. Among existing interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism, the view developed here is perhaps closest to that of Karl Ameriks, although significant differences remain. See, most recently, Ameriks (2003a), 1–40.

64. It is important to note that the conflict between what Kant calls transcendental idealism and what he calls transcendental realism primarily concerns the status of appearances. The transcendental idealist rigorously distinguishes appearances from the in itself and, because she applies the correct standard of truth to appearances—the standard of conformity to the formal conditions of human cognition, not to the in itself—she is able to be an empirical realist. In contrast, the transcendental realist fails to distinguish appearances from the in itself, and thus applies to appearances a standard of reality—namely, conformity to the in itself—which appearances cannot meet, and so is forced willy-nilly into empirical idealism.

65. Kant (1900–), KrV, A11/B25.

objects. Transcendental cognition is cognition of the *a priori* necessary conditions for the possibility of cognition of objects. For example, transcendental cognition is concerned with *a priori* concepts of objects or categories, and with corresponding principles. Note that, although investigation of the necessary conditions of experience counts as transcendental cognition, the possibility is not excluded that there is also an investigation of the necessary conditions of practical cognition that counts equally as transcendental cognition. So it would be imprecise to identify transcendental cognition with cognition of the necessary conditions of experience.

In its second application, the contrast picks out two registers of meaning:

But since the expression *outside us* carries with it an unavoidable ambiguity, since it sometimes signifies something that, *as a thing in itself*, exists distinct from us and sometimes merely something that belongs to outer appearance, then in order to escape uncertainty and use this concept in the latter significance . . . we will distinguish *empirically external* objects from those that might be called "external" in the transcendental sense, by directly calling them "things that are to be encountered in space."⁶⁶

Here the contrast is between two registers of meaning of the further contrast: real versus ideal, or outer versus inner. At a first pass, one might suggest that the contrast between real and ideal is the contrast between that which is independent of us, or that which is mind-independent, and that which is dependent upon us, or mind-dependent. Then, empirically inflected, the contrast will pick out, on the one hand, that which is in space and, on the other, that which is within an individual mind. Transcendentally inflected, it will distinguish between, on the one hand, that which is independent of the necessary conditions of human cognition and in this respect mind-independent, and that which is subject to those conditions or mind-dependent.

But more than this can be said. Specifically, consideration of the term *real* enables more to be said about the use of the verb "to be" in formulations such as "that which is mind-dependent" and "that which is mind-independent." For it has been pointed out that Kant does not use the term *real* interchangeably with *actual*.⁶⁷ For example, when, in his criticism of

66. Kant (1900-), KrV, A373. Cf. Kant (1900-), PFM, 20: 269, where Kant distinguishes between "the transcendental sense" of "appearance" and the sense appropriate to "the language of experience."

67. See Seigfried (1982).

the ontological argument, Kant objects that "to be" is not a "real predicate," he does not mean that it is not actually a predicate at all, which might be meant by a contemporary logician who follows Gottlob Frege in thinking that existence statements should be expressed through the apparatus of quantificational, not merely propositional logic. Kant's point is that "to be" is not a predicate signifying a property that could be properly included in an explication of the reality or substantial being or essence of a thing. In the post-Leibnizian tradition, reality or substantial being or essence is explained within the framework of a metaphysics that seeks to respond to the Agrippan trilemma. Thus something's degree of reality or substantial being corresponds to its contribution to a genuine grounding that terminates in an absolute ground. As the absolute ground, God is the *ens realissimum*, for He grounds all things while, as a necessary being, needing no ground outside Himself. Among created beings, substances have the most reality for, although they depend for their existence on God, they have essences or complete concepts comprised of properties that enable them to serve as grounds for other properties. Real properties are those that can comprise an essence. However, properties that are grounded in a substance but that cannot themselves serve as grounds may be called ideal. Mental representations are paradigmatic instances but not necessarily the only ones. Underlying this usage is the assumption that grounding is an asymmetric and context-independent relation that structures a hierarchy. When Kant says that "to be" is not a real predicate, his point is that no light is shed on the place of something in the hierarchy of grounding when one says that this something is or exists. Such a predication is equivalent to the assertion that something is actual, and therefore actually plays the role in the hierarchy of grounding assigned to it through its real predicates, which comprise its complete concept independently of whether or not it is actualized by God.

It follows that the contrast between, on the one hand, transcendental reality and ideality, and, on the other, empirical reality and ideality, is a contrast between two hierarchies of grounding. The transcendental hierarchy of grounding is appropriate to the in itself. The empirical hierarchy of grounding is appropriate to appearances. Put another way, the contrast between the in itself and appearances is a contrast between two construals of substantial being or essence.

This interpretation coheres well with the point that the Kantian dualism of the in itself and the appearance constitutes a response to the Dualistic

Demand and the Monistic Demand, and ultimately to the Agrippan trilemma. As in Leibniz, there are two orders of grounding, such that one is subject to the Agrippan trilemma while the other is not, and such that the former is in some way dependent upon—an appearance of—the latter. However, the former or empirical order is not phenomenal in Leibniz's sense of the term because it has its own standards of reality: the necessary conditions of human cognition.⁶⁸ Thus the Copernican revolution transforms but does not abolish the Leibnizian duality.

It is now possible to see why the question "Two aspects or two existents?" is ill-formed. Only when dealing with existents possessing the same kind of essence, or participating in the same grounding hierarchy, does it make sense to ask whether two descriptions pick out one existent or two. Kant himself points out that the individuation of appearances, which may involve nothing more than spatial location relative to time, cannot provide a model for the individuation of the in itself, which is neither spatial nor temporal. To ask whether the in itself and the appearance are two aspects or two entities is to presuppose falsely that a single method of individuation and counting may be applied to both the noumenal and the phenomenal.⁶⁹

1.6

At this point, two objections are likely to be raised. The first, textual objection, is that I have said nothing to account for the passages that seem to support the insistence on one realm of existents by proponents of both the Two Methods and Two Aspects views. These are passages where Kant speaks of the very same objects considered as appearance and as thing in itself. The second, philosophical objection, is that I have said nothing to explain in what sense appearances are supposed to *depend* upon things in themselves, a thesis objected to by all proponents of the Two Methods view and by some proponents of the Two Aspects view. My response to the second objection will enable me to respond to the first. But this response requires an investigation of the more articulated versions of Kantian dualism available only through the development of an account of the faculties.

The Agrippan trilemma enables an elegant sketch of Kant's doctrine of

68. Nor is it ideal in Leibniz's sense, insofar as that would mean, not merely dependent upon mental activity but mental. See Chapter 3.

69. See Gardner (1999), 297–298.

the faculties. Sensibility is the faculty concerned solely with grounding relations subject to the Agrippan trilemma. Understanding is the Janus-faced faculty concerned *either* with grounding relations subject to the Agrippan trilemma, insofar as it is employed in the determination of empirically real objects, *or* with grounding relations that escape the Agrippan trilemma, insofar as it is employed in the thought of transcendently real things in themselves. Reason is the faculty concerned solely with grounding relations that escape the Agrippan trilemma. Finally, judgment is the faculty concerned simultaneously *both* with grounding relations subject to the Agrippan trilemma *and* with grounding relations that escape it.

Two familiar ways in which German idealists and other post-Kantians interpret Kantian dualism are incompatible with my thesis that Kant, like Leibniz and the German idealists, is responsive to the problem of simultaneously satisfying the Dualistic Demand and the Monistic Demand. One approach, pioneered by Karl Leonhard Reinhold, denies in effect that Kant is responsive to the Dualistic Demand. The other, pioneered by Salomon Maimon, denies in effect that Kant is responsive to the Monistic Demand. Both of these remarkably influential interpretations of Kant, I am going to argue, are incorrect and misrepresent Kant's doctrine of the faculties, obscuring the relationship between Kantian dualism and German idealism.

It is helpful to begin with Maimon because his response to Kantian dualism provides a helpful framework within which to situate a range of possible interpretations, and because his remarks show that what is ultimately at stake is Kant's ability to respond to Agrippan skepticism about empirical cognition.

One of Maimon's most suggestive formulations is that the fundamental problem of transcendental philosophy—the question *quid juris* concerning our right to apply the categories to sensuously given objects⁷⁰—is equivalent *both* to the question of creation, which was central to the concerns of medieval philosophers like Moses Maimonides, *and* to the question of the community of soul and body, which was central to the concerns of early modern philosophers like Descartes. As Maimon explains, “The question of the explanation of the unification of soul and body is . . . reduced to the following question: how is it conceivable that forms *a priori* should agree with things given *a posteriori*? And the second question is reduced to the

70. For Kant's distinction between the questions *quid juris* and *quid facti*, see Kant (1900–), KrV, A85/B117.

following: how is the coming-to-be of matter, as something merely given but not thought, conceivable through the assumption of an intelligence, since they are indeed so heterogeneous?"⁷¹ Maimon takes the question *quid juris* to be primarily the question: how is it possible to apply forms of intelligibility to given matter?

Now Maimon famously claims that the question is simply unanswerable on the Kantian assumption that "sensibility and understanding are two wholly different sources of our knowledge." However, he says, the question is answerable on what amounts to a *twofold assumption*, ascribed by Maimon to Leibniz and Christian Freiherr von Wolff. The first assumption, as Maimon puts it in the *Versuch*, is that the cognitions of sensibility and understanding flow from a single source and differ only in degree of completeness.⁷² Or, as Maimon puts it in his commentary to Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*, "the understanding and sensibility are not things distinct from one another with a real distinction, but rather with a merely formal distinction."⁷³ The second assumption is that our finite intellect is "exactly the same as" an assumed infinite intellect, "only in a limited way." Or, as Maimon puts it in his commentary, "the difference between the infinite intellect, may it be exalted, and our intellect [is] be merely formal."⁷⁴

What is at stake should be clear, in light of my earlier discussion. Maimon worries that Kant is committed to two wholly distinct kinds of grounding, one subject to the Agrippan trilemma and the other not. But there can be an adequate answer to Agrippan skepticism only if a kind of grounding that is subject to the Agrippan trilemma can be shown to be derivative from some kind of grounding that escapes the trilemma and terminates in an absolute ground. So, adopting a version of Kant's transcendental method, Maimon wants to show that a certain kind of grounding that terminates in an absolute ground—whose details do not concern us here—is a necessary condition for the knowability of sensuously given objects.

For my purposes here, what is important is Maimon's invocation of the scholastic doctrine of distinctions, which he uses to frame his difference

71. Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 62–63.

72. Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 63.

73. Maimon (2000b), GhM, 107.

74. Maimon (2000b), GhM, 107.

from Kant, not the details of Maimon's own position.⁷⁵ For that doctrine provides an extremely useful framework for the discussion of Kantian dualism, of misunderstandings of that dualism, and of alternatives to it.

A real distinction—the sort of distinction that Descartes sought to demonstrate between body and mind—is a distinction between terms that are intelligible independently of one another, such as distinct substances, or modes of distinct substances.⁷⁶ When Maimon speaks of formal distinctions, he may mean either modal distinctions or rational distinctions.⁷⁷ Two

75. For more on Maimon, see Franks (2004).

76. For a classic discussion of real, modal, and rational distinctions, as well as an argument that no other distinctions need to be added to the list, see Suárez (1947). These distinctions have occasioned much terminological variation and confusion. But, in the wake of Suárez, there appears to be widespread consensus about the *extensions* of these distinctions, while there are at least two distinct traditions concerning their *intensions*, corresponding to two traditions concerning the concept of *substance*. Thus real distinctions obtain between distinct substances or between modes of distinct substances; modal distinctions between an essential property of a substance and a mode of the same substance, or between modes of one substance; and rational distinctions obtain between an object and itself, considered under two concepts. In the Cartesian tradition, these distinctions are explained as follows: *X* and *Y* are really distinct iff each *can exist* when the other does not; *X* and *Y* are modally distinct iff either one can exist when the other does not, but not vice versa, or either can exist when the other does not, but they have a necessary condition for their existence in common; and *X* and *Y* are rationally distinct iff neither can exist when the other does not. See Descartes (1964–1976), VII 100, 120–121; VIII 28–30; IV 348–350. See also Gilson (1979), 86–90; Wells (1966); Secada (2000), 194–197. In the Leibnizian tradition, the distinctions are explained differently: *X* and *Y* are really distinct iff each is *intelligible* independently of the other; *X* and *Y* are modally distinct iff one is intelligible independently of the other, but not vice versa, or either can exist without the other, but they have a necessary condition for their intelligibility in common; and *X* and *Y* are rationally distinct iff they have all necessary conditions for their intelligibility in common. The Leibnizian-Wolffian school regards the Cartesian account of substance or real distinction as an error that leads to Spinozism by leaving no room for finite, dependent substances. See, for example, Wolff's refutation of Spinoza in Wolff (1978–), XV, and Kant's remarks in Kant (1900–), 28: 564. Both Kant and Maimon should be situated in the Leibnizian rather than the Cartesian tradition.

77. The term *formal distinction* is attributable to Duns Scotus, and the confusion surrounding the term may be traceable to Scotus's own formulations. See Grajewski (1944), for example, 5 n.6: "at times Duns Scotus substitutes the formal distinction for the virtual distinction of the Thomists (e.g. among the attributes of God); on other occasions, he uses the formal distinction in lieu of the real distinction (e.g., the distinction of the faculties of the soul)." For more sympathetic accounts, see Adams (1982), 412–417; Cross (1999), 149; and King (2003), 22–25. Suárez (1947) argues that, insofar as it is useful, the formal distinction is reducible either to a rational distinction in which one thing is considered under two inadequate concepts, or to a modal distinction between an essential property of a substance and a mode of the same substance. He therefore argues for the abandonment of the term *formal distinction* and for the adoption of the term *modal distinction*. In what follows, I assume that, in the wake of Suárez, Maimon uses the term *formal distinction* as equivalent to *modal distinction*, and not to signify any peculiarly Scotist distinction, say, between existentially inseparable yet definitionally—and not merely notionally—distinct aspects of a thing.

terms are modally distinct iff one is unintelligible without the other, but not vice versa. For example, a mode may be unintelligible without reference to the substance of which it is a mode, but the substance may be intelligible without reference to the mode. Two terms are rationally distinct iff each is unintelligible without the other. For example, a substance is intelligible only with reference to its essence and vice versa.

If, like Maimon, we are going to apply this set of distinctions to Kantian faculties, then we must make a crucial further distinction which, unfortunately, is not drawn by Maimon or by Reinhold or, for that matter, by many others. Namely, we must distinguish between *distinctions between faculties*—that is, capacities—and *distinctions between exercises of faculties*—that is, actualizations.⁷⁸

Now, any interpretation of Kant's account of the faculties should satisfy both of the following desiderata. The first desideratum is that each of the faculties considered in the first two *Critiques*—sensibility, understanding, and reason—must have a distinctive exercise, by means of which its distinctive *a priori* principle can be discerned. Thus sensibility finds its distinctive use in geometry, understanding in logic, reason in practical deliberation with the categorical imperative as its highest principle, and judgment in aesthetic judgment.⁷⁹

It would be interesting, however, to explore the possibility of a more Scotist approach. I am grateful to Stephen Dumont for helpful discussion.

78. This further distinction also helps illuminate contemporary debates about whether the content of perception is nonconceptual. In his advocacy of nonconceptual content, Evans is concerned, in part, with the distinction between the *faculties* of sensibility and understanding. For he holds that animals have sensibility in the way we do, but that we also have understanding. See Evans (1982), 124. Thus he holds at least that there is a modal distinction between sensibility and understanding, for sensibility is intelligible without understanding. If he were also committed to the view that the latter is intelligible without the former, that a being could have understanding without sensibility, then he would be committed to a real distinction between the faculties, but it is implausible that he in fact takes this view. Christopher Peacocke is also an advocate of nonconceptual content, but differs from Gareth Evans in the following way. He does not agree that animals have sensibility in the way we do, maintaining instead that human sensibility is unintelligible without reference to understanding. That is, only a being with conceptual capacities could have senses in the way we do. However, as I understand it, Peacocke's local holism involves the view that there are *exercises* of sensibility that are really distinct from exercises of the understanding, although the distinction between the faculties of sensibility and understanding is rational. The contents made available through really distinct exercises of sensibility are nonconceptual. See Peacocke (1992), 90–92; McDowell (1994), 56–60; and the exchange between Peacocke and McDowell in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58, No. 2 (1998), 386, 418–419.

79. A comment by Justin Shaddock led to some improvements in the formulation of this paragraph.

The second desideratum is that the possibility of some collaborative exercises of faculties must be guaranteed. Most famously, experience is possible only if it is guaranteed that sensibility and understanding can be exercised collaboratively in synthetic *a priori* judgments. This does not mean only that we must necessarily *presuppose* such a possibility as a condition for the possibility of experience. It means also that there must be a necessity in the collaboration itself: anything that can be given through sensibility must necessarily be subject to the categories—that is, to the fundamental concepts of the understanding.

Maimon and Reinhold exemplify two ways of misunderstanding Kantian dualism by construing one of the desiderata in a way that makes the satisfaction of the other impossible.

Maimon thinks that, since Kant is committed to distinctive uses of faculties, he must be committed to really distinct faculties.⁸⁰ If this were so, then one could have sensibility without reason and vice versa, and one also could have understanding without reason and vice versa. Then Kantian dualism would be comparable to Cartesian dualism: we would have sensibility insofar as we are corporeal beings and understanding insofar as we are rational beings, and it would be extremely difficult to see how human beings with both faculties could constitute substantial unities. Indeed, we might well conclude—as Maimon does—that the second desideratum cannot be satisfied, hence that the problem of the Transcendental Deduction cannot be solved on Kantian assumptions. But the mistake here lies in the inference from distinctive exercises to really distinct faculties. For there is no contradiction in the thought that faculties that are modally or ration-

80. Pains must be taken to avoid terminological confusion here. For example, Laywine (1994), 104, writes: "So this much is clear at the outset of the *Inaugural Dissertation*: we must make a *real* distinction between sensibility and the understanding. It is not enough to say as Wolff and the followers of Leibniz that knowledge conveyed to us by the first faculty is somehow more confused and less distinct than knowledge conveyed to us by the second." According to my usage, there is no real distinction between the faculties in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. However, Kant's position here is that both sensibility and understanding are faculties of cognition, and there appears to be a real distinction between the objects of cognition proper to the two faculties. Nevertheless, there need be no disagreement between Laywine and myself, for she may not be using the term *real distinction* in the scholastic sense. She seems, rather, to be using Kant's pre-critical distinction between the real and the logical. In the critical period, this becomes the distinction between the transcendental and the logical, or between transcendental logic and general logic. Laywine's point is that, for Kant in 1770, the distinction between sensibility and understanding does not merely concern the general logical characteristics such as clarity and distinctness, but concerns rather a transcendental distinction between *a priori* conditions of possibility.

ally distinct may have distinctive uses. Indeed, there is no contradiction in the thought that modally distinct faculties may have really distinct uses.⁸¹

Reinhold thinks that, since Kant is committed to necessary collaborations of faculties, he must reject exercises of faculties that are more than rationally distinct. Although Reinhold takes himself to be defending Kant's views, he in fact renders impossible the satisfaction of the first desideratum, and he distorts Kantian dualism into a kind of monism.⁸² Thus, on Reinhold's interpretation, things in themselves are not thinkable yet unknowable, as they are for Kant. Instead, things in themselves are unthinkable and incomprehensible, and therefore—by a trivial inference—unknowable. For Reinhold does not leave room for distinctive uses of either understanding or reason that could yield either a negative or a positive conception of a noumenon.⁸³

How, then, should Kant's own view about the relationship between sensibility and understanding be characterized? Certainly each of these faculties must be accorded its own distinctive use. But, as I have said, this is not sufficient to foreclose any of the possible distinctions between the faculties. However, satisfaction of the second desideratum—the project of the Transcendental Deduction—rules out, as Maimon sees, the possibility of a real distinction between the faculties. So the distinction must be either modal or rational. I will argue that it is modal.⁸⁴

Now, in Section 26 of the B-edition Transcendental Deduction, Kant says that the unity of the formal intuition of space was ascribed in the

81. This is, I think, what Peacocke has in mind when he speaks, in Peacocke (1998), 386, of "nonconceptualist positions which . . . regard conceptual and nonconceptual contents as forming a local holism. For these positions, neither kind of content can be given a constitutive elucidation without reference to the other; but there remains a distinction between them." On local holisms, see Peacocke (1992).

82. See Reinhold (1789), VTV, 235, for the view that the matter and form of representation are only notionally distinct: "both matter and form constitute representation indeed only through their *unification*, and may not be separated from one another without the representation being thereby destroyed." Reinhold goes on to say that, "It is equally true that they are *essentially distinct* constituents of representation, and cannot be confused with one another, without bringing about a misunderstanding that must be extremely consequential in philosophy, and has actually been present until now." See 217–218 below.

83. See Ameriks's illuminating essays on so-called short arguments for transcendental idealism, beginning with Reinhold, collected in Ameriks (2000a).

84. I leave for discussion elsewhere two possible views: that the faculties are rationally distinct but may have really distinct uses; that the faculties are formally distinct in some other, genuinely Scotist sense.

Transcendental Aesthetic “merely to sensibility, only in order to note that it precedes all concepts, although to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible” and through which “the understanding determines the sensibility.”⁸⁵ He also says that “it is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and here under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition.”⁸⁶ Here Kant ascribes primacy to understanding over sensibility. For it is the former that determines the latter, not vice versa. In addition, Kant offers what he claims to be a strict deduction of the determinate forms of judgment, while offering no such deduction of the determinate forms of sensibility.⁸⁷ This suggests that a finite rational being essentially has a discursive understanding with determinate forms of judgment whereas, while such a being must also have *some* faculty of affection, it is neither essential nor necessary to have *our* forms of sensibility: space and time.⁸⁸

We must distinguish between *receptivity in general* and *specifically human sensibility*. Discursive understanding is *rationally* distinct from sensibility in general. For we cannot make discursive understanding intelligible without reference to receptivity in general, although no reference to specifically human sensibility is required. And we cannot make receptivity in general intelligible without reference to discursive understanding. However, discursive understanding is *modally* distinct from specifically human sensibility. For we can make discursive understanding intelligible without reference to specifically human sensibility, but we cannot make specifically human sensibility intelligible without reference to discursive understanding. It is on this last point that Kant’s resolution of the Transcendental Deduction problem ultimately rests.

However, to say in this sense that understanding determines sensibility is not to say that the forms of specifically human sensibility—space and time—can be *derived* from the forms of understanding. Such a derivation would be impossible, Kant thinks, because—as we have seen—through forms of the understanding alone one can think things in themselves,

85. Kant (1900–), KrV, B161n.

86. Kant (1900–), KrV, B162n.

87. Kant (1900–), KrV, A67/B92–AB113, known as the Metaphysical Deduction, thanks to B159.

88. Kant (1900–), KrV, B72.

which, supposing reason's demands to be met, must constitute nonrelational grounds for relational properties. But through the forms of specifically human sensibility the only objects that can be given are nothing but relations: objects that are what they are in part because of their careers within the relational framework of space and time. There is *no possible derivation* from forms of understanding—that is, from conceptual forms—either of synthetic *a priori* truths about the space-time framework, such as the truths that render it Euclidean rather than non-Euclidean, or of the natures of the objects that are what they are within that framework. Unlike the forms of the understanding, which are *necessarily determinate* and hence the same for any species of finite rational being, the forms of sensibility—and hence the forms of finite intelligibility, which express guaranteed collaborations between understanding and sensibility, that is, the schematized categories—are *contingently determinable*.⁸⁹ In other words, the distinction between understanding and specifically human sensibility is *modal but not derivational*. Thus Kant's account of the relationship between understanding and sensibility suggests Dependence Monism, but not the Derivability Monism of Leibniz, let alone the Derivation Monism of the German idealists.

Nevertheless, if Kant is a Dependence Monist, then he is still responsive, like Leibniz and the German idealists, to the problem of simultaneously satisfying the Dualistic Demand and the Monistic Demand. But this overlap in problematics is lost on Maimon and Reinhold, along with those who follow them.

The real distinctions between the faculties that Maimon mistakenly ascribes to Kant are incompatible with the Monistic Demand. However, Maimon himself repudiates this real distinction. So Maimon's own attitude to the fundamental dualism remains untouched by what has been said here. Reinhold, however, affirms the rational distinctions between the uses of the faculties that he mistakenly ascribes to Kant. These rational distinctions are surely incompatible with Kant's doctrine of faculties since, I have claimed, Kant's first *Critique* faculties are faculties only insofar as they have really distinct uses. More generally, these rational distinctions seem incompatible with the Dualistic Demand. But does that entail that Reinhold cannot inherit Kant's dualism in any way? It entails at least that he cannot

89. The contingent determinability of the forms of sensibility is either neglected or denied by proponents of both the German and British traditions of nondualistic Kant reading. On Heidegger, see Henrich (1994), 223–224, n.67.

inherit it as a dualism between two orders of grounding. For, if there is no use of the understanding that is really distinct from any reception through the senses, then things in themselves are not merely unknowable but *unthinkable*. Indeed, Reinhold seems committed to a dualism between the intelligible and the *unintelligible*, the unintelligible being the proper object of faith.⁹⁰ As we shall see in Chapter 4, Fichte's central criticism of Reinhold's pioneering version of the German idealist project is that it fails to adequately acknowledge the crucial dualism of the empirical and the transcendental. *Reinhold's* position is opposed to Kantian dualism, but it has not yet been shown that *German idealism in general* must inherit this hostility.

The overlap between the problems to which Kant is responsive and those to which both Leibniz and the German idealists respond has been lost on dominant traditions of Kant interpretation, on both the Anglo-American and Continental sides of the divide. For they have seen themselves as forced to choose between a real distinction between the faculties, mistakenly ascribed to Kant by Maimon, and rational distinctions between the uses of the faculties, mistakenly ascribed to Kant by Reinhold. Since, as Maimon is the first to argue, the former view makes it impossible to solve the problem of the Transcendental Deduction, sympathetic interpreters have proposed various versions of the latter.⁹¹

Still, it will be said, despite the overlap of problems, a fundamental difference between the responses remains. After all, Kant is committed only to Dependence Monism and rejects the Derivability Monism of Leibniz, let

90. This comes out most clearly in Reinhold's attempt to mediate between Fichte and Jacobi. See Reinhold (1799), SLF.

91. Anglo-American interpreters have tended to view sensibility and understanding as reciprocally dependent abstractions from concrete experience. See Strawson (1966), 47–51. As such, there is at most a rational distinction between sensibility and understanding. According to the development of the Strawsonian interpretation by McDowell (1994), 3–4, they are not even notionally—that is, rationally—distinct. See also Cassam (1999). Continental interpreters have tended to pursue the hint they find at A15/B29 that sensibility and understanding stem from a common root. In principle, this can be taken to mean that the two faculties are modally distinct as modes of an underlying capacity. However, it can lead to the view that the two faculties are only rationally distinct. The key question is whether the putatively underlying capacity is intelligible in terms independent of sensibility and understanding. If so, then a modal distinction between the faculties remains an option. If not, then it does not, and sensibility and understanding turn out to be two aspects of a single capacity. For an illuminating survey of the Continental tradition and its origin in a misreading of Kant, see Henrich (1994), 17–54. From my point of view, however, Henrich is too quick in assuming that German idealists who seek a common root—that is, a first principle—must take a position like Reinhold's, which is incompatible with both Kant's doctrine of the faculties and his fundamental dualism.

alone, the Derivation Monism of the German idealists. This is true, if Derivation Monism is concerned with the relationship between understanding and sensibility. However, I am going to argue that there is a version of Derivation Monism to which Kant himself is attracted, a version that concerns the relationship between reason and understanding.

1.7

It is in his descriptions of the Metaphysical Deduction of the categories of the understanding that Kant sounds most like the German idealists in his conception of systematicity. Thus he says that his pure consideration of the understanding can succeed only if the categories he adduces "entirely exhaust the entire field of pure understanding. Now this completeness of a science cannot reliably be assumed from a rough calculation of an aggregate put together by mere estimates; hence it is possible only by means of an *idea of the whole* of the *a priori* cognition of the understanding, and through the division of concepts that such an idea determines and that constitutes it, thus only through their *connection in a system*."⁹² Consequently: "Transcendental philosophy has the advantage but also the obligation to seek its concepts in accordance with a principle, since they spring pure and unmixed from the understanding, as absolute unity, and must therefore be connected among themselves in accordance with a concept or idea."⁹³ Indeed, Kant claims that his table of categories "is systematically generated from a common principle."⁹⁴ These categories, systematically derived from a first principle, then provide Kant with the clue that guides him through every region of the critical philosophy.

It may not sound very promising to appeal to the Metaphysical Deduction. For neither German idealists nor, for the most part, Kantians have claimed to discern its common principle and to trace the systematic generation of the categories from it. At the very dawn of German idealism, Reinhold views the Metaphysical Deduction as a preeminent symptom of the need to carry out that systematic generation from a single principle that Kant himself had called for but had failed to provide.⁹⁵ Maimon also levels

92. Kant (1900–), KrV, A64–65/B88–89.

93. Kant (1900–), KrV, A67/B92.

94. Kant (1900–), KrV, A80/B106.

95. Criticism of the Metaphysical Deduction is one aspect of Reinhold's general argument that Kant has arrived at correct results but has done so inductively rather than deductively—hence in a way that cannot compel conviction. See, for example, Reinhold (1791), ÜF, 118–121: "[General

against Kant the very accusation that Kant levels against Aristotle's doctrine of categories: that the list is arrived at rhapsodically and not systematically.⁹⁶

Since Klaus Reich's classic 1932 study, however, the Metaphysical Deduction has been taken far more seriously by interpreters of Kant.⁹⁷ It is now clear—thanks in large part to transcripts of logic lectures that were not previously available—that Kant does not merely appropriate, for the sake of transcendental logic, the forms of judgment made available in the now outmoded general logic of his times. Instead, he rethinks *both* general *and* transcendental logic on the basis of his far-reaching reconception of judgment as the exemplary act of a finite understanding.

Still, the first principle of the Metaphysical Deduction is surely not an absolute first principle in the way that Derivation Monism requires. Rather than starting from an absolute first principle—some fourth alternative that enables one to escape from the Agrippan trilemma—the Metaphysical Deduction surely begins from the purely formal principle of the transcendental unity of apperception, which expresses the finite character of a subject whose thought remains empty without data given to its receptive faculty. So it seems implausible that the Metaphysical Deduction could help respond to Agrippan skepticism by invoking an *absolute* ground.

It is the faculty of reason that is concerned with absolute grounding. Could there be a modal distinction between reason and understanding, in which reason has primacy? This hope is dashed by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where it seems, on the contrary, that reason depends for its intelligibility on understanding, but not vice versa, and even that the forms of reason are derivable from the forms of understanding.

logic] has hitherto lacked a recognized first principle (and has usurped it instead from metaphysics). . . . It can offer no certainty, therefore, as to whether [its principles] are complete in number, or how they rank—or whether they are of the same order or stand subordinated each to another . . . And even if we already possessed logic in a genuinely systematic form, still we would look in vain for the completely determined concept of *thought* in it. This is the concept from which it must proceed but which, precisely for this reason, it cannot provide. . . . In this situation of the logic, it is not difficult to understand that there was little, if anything at all, that Kant could safely take over from the *general* logic into his *Transcendental Logic*."

96. The systematic derivation of forms of transcendental logic or categories, and the derivation therefrom of the forms of general logic, is Maimon's project in his *Logik* and his *Die Kategorien des Aristoteles* (*Aristotle's Categories*), both published in 1794. For his attitude to Kant's Metaphysical Deduction, see, for example, Maimon (2000a), *Logik*, 5: "Logic . . . so far from being the premise of *transcendental philosophy*, must have it as its premise instead."

97. Reich (1992). Of particular importance in this regard are Wolff (1995), Longuenesse (1998), and Brandt (2000). See also Allison (2004), 133–156.

For, "we must . . . note that it is only from the understanding that pure and transcendental concepts can arise, that reason really cannot generate any concept at all, but can at most only *free a concept of the understanding* from the unavoidable limitations of a possible experience, and thus seek to extend it beyond the boundaries of the empirical, though still in connection with it."⁹⁸ Thus the ideas of reason are derivable from the categories of the understanding. To be sure, Kant says that, "the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth."⁹⁹ But this suggests only that the *use* of the understanding would be seriously deficient without guidance by reason, not that, without reason, one could possess no understanding at all.

From this point of view, could any sense be made of the notion that Kant still regards natural grounding, which is subject to the Agrippan trilemma, as derivative from the supernatural grounding that escapes it, with which reason is concerned? It seems that the most one could say is that Kant's doctrine of the highest good commits him to the view that we have reason to hope that progress is occurring towards a condition in which, with divine assistance, the natural order is in harmony with the moral order, and happiness is distributed in accordance with virtue.¹⁰⁰ In such a condition, the extent to which moral agents meet reason's demands for absolute grounding will determine the natural events which we can know in a way that does not allow for absolute grounding. But the determination is not direct: it is a co-variance established by God. Still this might suffice for a version of Derivability Monism, since we could grasp the constructibility of the highest good—we could see why, given a certain degree of virtue, a certain degree of happiness should be distributed to an agent—although we could never grasp the actual connection, which would be accessible only to God. Still the harmony is a goal towards which we can rationally hope to progress. It is hard to see how a teleological version of Derivability Monism could provide a response to Agrippan skepticism about empirical knowledge prior to the attainment of the goal.

We must not forget, however, that Kant's thinking does not remain static after 1781. As Eckart Förster has pointed out, one significant shift is a reconception of the relationship between understanding and reason. Thus,

98. Kant (1900–), KrV, A408–409/B435–436.

99. Kant (1900–), KrV, A651/B679.

100. For an account of this doctrine in Kant's three critiques, see Guyer (2000).

in the *Opus postumum*, Kant writes, "Reason precedes, with the projection of its forms" and "*Ideas* precede appearances in space and time."¹⁰¹ Of course, this is very late evidence from a highly problematic source. Nevertheless, there is evidence, I believe, that Kant is taking steps towards this reconception much earlier than the bulk of his work on the *Opus postumum*. This evidence suggests the possibility of a reworking of the Metaphysical Deduction which, however, Kant himself did not carry out.

The evidence I have in mind comes from one of Kant's responses to the Spinozism controversy that gave rise to German idealism—in particular, from Kant's 1786 response to Moses Mendelssohn's last word on behalf of the pre-Kantian enlightenment: the *Morgenstunden*. Although Mendelssohn confesses that he has not been able to study Kant's critical philosophy, he makes a remark that, as Kant notices, challenges the meaningfulness of the distinction between empirical and transcendental reality, and thereby questions the meaningfulness of Kant's transcendental idealism: "If I tell you what a thing does or undergoes, then ask no further what it is! If I tell you what sort of concept you have to form of a thing, then the further question, what that thing is in itself [*an sich selbst*] has no more sense."¹⁰² In response, Kant first makes what should by now be a familiar point. He notes that, as demonstrated in his *Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science*, we can know *only* irreducibly relational determinations within the empirical world, and we cannot know anything inner. Then Kant makes some surprising comments on proper procedure in metaphysics:

Consider only how you form the concept of God as Highest Intelligence. You think pure, true reality in Him, i.e., something that is not merely opposed to negations (as one commonly maintains), but rather and pre-eminently [something that is opposed to] the realities in appearance (*realitas phaenomenon*), to all those that must be given to us through the senses and for just that reason called *realitas apparens* (albeit not in an entirely appropriate expression). If one now diminishes all these realities (understanding, will, blessedness, power, etc.) with respect to degree, then they remain ever the same [realities] with respect to manner (quality), [and]

101. Kant (1900–), 21: 15 and 106, cited by Förster (2000), 150.

102. Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden* (*Morning Hours*) in Mendelssohn (1974), III/2, 60. This passage seems to undermine the suggestion made by Warren (2001), 45, that Mendelssohn would reject the idea that a concept of the thing in itself could be formed on the sole basis of knowledge of relations, and that Mendelssohn would think that such knowledge raises a legitimate question about what this thing is in itself.

then you have properties of things in themselves, which you can also apply to other things besides God. You can think no other [properties of things in themselves], everything else is only reality in appearance (property of a thing as object of the senses), whereby you never think a thing as it is in itself. To be sure, it seems odd that we can determine our concepts of things in themselves appropriately only insofar as we first lead back [*reduciren*] all reality to the concept of God and that we should apply it to other things as things in themselves only insofar as it finds its place within [that concept]. That alone is properly the means of separation of everything sensible and of appearance from that which can be considered through the understanding as appropriate to things in themselves.¹⁰³

Kant's general point is clear. It makes sense to distinguish empirical reality from transcendental reality, and so it makes sense to say, for example, that we can know only appearances but not things in themselves. For empirical reality is irreducibly relational and hence subject to the Agrippan trilemma. In contrast, reason demands that we think things in themselves as escaping the trilemma by providing a nonrelational ground for relational properties. When one contrasts empirical reality as it is known in Newtonian physics with transcendental reality as it is positively conceived in metaphysics—that is, with noumena in the positive sense that is hypothetically necessary—then it is unquestionable that one is drawing a meaningful distinction. Indeed, it is clear that things in themselves can never be known through the study of empirical objects, and that, even if one has complete knowledge of “what a thing does or undergoes,” there will still be a meaningful question about what it is in itself.

For my purposes, however, what is important is Kant's point that the absolutely infinite—God—must not be conceived through a negation of the limits of finite substances. Rather, the reality of finite things in themselves—that is, in Kant's terminology, *transcendental reality*—must be conceived through a limitation of the reality pertaining to or grounded in the absolutely infinite.

Before Kant, Descartes and Newton also insist that the finite must be viewed as a negation of the infinite, not vice versa, and, after Kant, this insight is also central to the thinking of Levinas.¹⁰⁴ But is it not surprising

103. Kant (1900–), BJPM, 8: 154.

104. See Descartes (1964–1976), 7: 45–46: “And I must not think that, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light, so my perception of the infinite is arrived at not by means of a true idea but merely by negating the finite. On the contrary,

to hear Kant make this metaphysical point? Is it not doubly surprising to hear him say that *this alone* is the key to the separation of the sensible from the intelligible, a separation whose significance for the critical project could hardly be overestimated?

According to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “our concepts of things in themselves” are ultimately derived from the *a priori* structure of the understanding. In the negative sense, our indeterminate concept of things in themselves is an abstract concept of a thing in general or a transcendental object. In the positive sense, our concepts of things in themselves are categories that are extended to the unconditioned. But according to this 1786 text, “our concepts of things in themselves”—presumably of things in themselves in the positive sense—are derived from the idea of God, hence from an idea of reason.

Clearly, a shift in Kant’s thinking has occurred. And this shift creates a new possibility: the possibility of a Metaphysical Deduction of the categories whose first principle is not the concept of a finite, discursive understanding, but rather the idea of God as *ens realissimum*. But this is the possibility of Derivation Monism.

I am not suggesting that the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction, suggested by Kant’s 1786 response to Mendelssohn, is to be found within the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There Kant thinks of the principle of the transcendental unity of apperception, expressive of the discursive character of *finite* understanding, as the first principle of the Metaphysical Deduction. Indeed, he seems to think that the demand for an *omnitude realitatis* grounded in the *ens realissimum* is itself a dialectical illusion. Thus he writes:

I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than there is in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to the perception of the finite, that is, myself. For how could I understand that I doubted or desired—that is, lacked something—and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?” See also Newton, “De gravitatione et aequipondio fluidorum,” in Newton (2004), 24: “Should one say further that we do not understand what an infinite being is, save by negating the limitations of a finite being, and that this is a negative and faulty conception, I deny this. For the limit or boundary is the restriction or negation of greater reality or existence in the limited being, and the less we conceive any being to be constrained by limits, the more we observe something to be attributed to it, that is, the more positively we conceive it. And thus by negating all limits the conception becomes maximally positive. ‘End’ [finis] is a word negative with respect to perception, and thus ‘infinity,’ since it is the negation of a negation (that is, of ends), will be a word maximally positive with respect to our perception and understanding, though it seems grammatically negative.”

Now in fact no other objects except those of sense can be given to us, and they can be given nowhere except in the context of a possible experience; consequently, nothing is an object *for us* unless it presupposes the sum total of all empirical reality as condition of its possibility. In accordance with a natural illusion, we regard as a principle that must hold of all things in general that which properly holds only of those which are given as objects of our senses. . . .

That we subsequently hypostatize this idea of the sum total of all reality, however, comes about because we dialectically transform the *distributive* unity of the use of the understanding in experience into the *collective* unity of a whole of experience; and from this whole of appearance we think up an individual thing containing in itself all empirical reality, which then—by means of the transcendental subreption we have already thought—is confused with the concept of a thing that stands at the summit of the possibility of all things, providing the real conditions for their thoroughgoing determination.¹⁰⁵

Here Kant suggests that the idea of an *omnitudo realitatis* is illicitly formed from the legitimate idea of “the sum total of empirical reality.” This latter sum-total is a distributive unity. That is to say, the whole of possible experience is a unity in virtue of the categorial principles that make any given empirical object possible, but this unity is merely distributive because the principles enable the anticipation only of the form of possible experience, while the matter of possible experience must be given and cannot be anticipated *a priori*.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, the *omnitudo realitatis*, as a sum-total of transcendental reality, would be a *collective* unity. That is to say, it would be a unity in virtue of principles that make possible the anticipation not only of the form but also of the matter of cognition. One cannot legitimately derive the idea of a collective unity from that of a distributive unity. In a similar vein, Kant wrote the following in his own copy of the A-edition of the *Critique*, at A266, when he is discussing the distinction between form and matter: “The thoroughgoing determination as principle is grounded on the unity of consciousness.” On this picture, we abstract from the specific finite intelligibility of objects to humans, thereby forming an indeterminate concept of a thing in general, whose intelligibility does not depend

105. Kant (1900–), KrV, A582–583/B660–661.

106. See Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 327–328, and the illuminating discussion in Friedman (1992a), 300–303.

on any condition peculiar to human knowers. However, this yields at most an idea of a noumenon in the negative sense. When we subsequently imagine the realization of that idea by a completely determinate thing in itself—a noumenon in the positive sense—we are falling prey to a dialectical illusion.

It is not clear, however, even within the *Critique of Pure Reason*, why Kant should take this dim view of the idea of an *omnitude realitatis* grounded in an *ens realissimum*. Since it does not appear to lead to any antinomy, why should he not hold, rather, that such an idea expresses a synthetic *a priori* demand of reason, which, however, cannot be assumed to be actualized? Then falling prey to the dialectical illusion would consist, not in reason's demand, but rather in the thought that reason's demand must be met by actuality.¹⁰⁷ Contemporaneous readers are justifiably confused about Kant's attitude towards a way of thinking about God that is central to Kant's thinking as late as the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770.¹⁰⁸

107. Indeed, it can be argued that this would be more consistent with Kant's general account of transcendental illusion. Ironically, this is suggested by Allison's recent attempt to give a sympathetic reading of the relevant texts. Allison wants to follow Grier (2001), who rightly insists on the distinction between dialectical illusion, which is natural and unavoidable, and metaphysical error, which presupposes dialectical illusion but which may be avoided by abandoning transcendental realism for transcendental idealism. But on Allison's own account, the first step in the formation of the ideal is the dialectical substitution of the collective unity of reason for the distributive unity of the understanding, and this step already involves the erroneous assumption of transcendental realism. So in rational theology there is no illusion without error, contrary to Allison's—and, I think, Kant's—intention. See Allison (2004), 408. Kant's own account of transcendental illusion requires, then, that the substitution claim be dropped and that the ideal be ascribed a nondialectical origin in reason. This is, of course, just the move that I am suggesting Kant takes later.

108. Kant's more negative assessment may have been fairly short-lived. He considers the argument uncritically in numerous *Reflexionen* from the 1770s. See, for example, R4244–4249, R4253, R4255, R4262, R4255, R4569–4570, R4729, R5270–5274, R5500, R5502–5505, R5522. According to Guyer and Wood, in their edition of Kant's *Critique* (1998a), 746, n.87, no *Reflexionen* before the publication of *A* take a negative attitude towards the idea. See, however, R6248–6256, R6290, R6293, R6298, for negative remarks after publication. For an apparently positive postpublication appraisal, expressing the attitude I suggest Kant could have taken, see R6289, from c. 1783–1784: "The *ens realissimum* must be given prior to any possibility . . . not as object, but as the mere form of reason, to think the difference of any possible thing in its thoroughgoing determination, thus as an idea which is (subjectively) actual before something is thought as possible." See Longuenesse (1998), 155, n.35. Kant's lectures on theology also express a positive attitude towards the argument, not as an existence-proof, but "as a necessary transcendental hypothesis" with subjective necessity. He emphasizes that the proof establishes the logical, but not the real possibility, let alone the actuality of God. See Kant (1900–), VpR, 28: 1004–1006, 1013–1047, 1036ff.

By 1786, Kant has attained a more appreciative view of the idea of an *omnitudo realitatis* grounded in an *ens realissimum*—without returning to his pre-critical view that it can serve as the only possible ground for proof of the existence of God. For in his more famous response to the pantheism controversy, “What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?” he writes:

Since reason needs to presuppose reality as given for the possibility of all things, and considers the differences between things only as limitations arising through the negations attaching to them, it sees itself necessitated to take as a ground one single possibility, namely that of an unlimited being, to consider it as original and all others as derived. Since also the thoroughgoing possibility of every thing must be encountered within existence as a whole—or at least since this is the only way in which the principle of thoroughgoing determination makes it possible for our reason to distinguish between the possible and the actual—we find a subjective ground of necessity, i.e., a need in our reason itself to take the existence of a most real (highest) being as the ground of all possibility.¹⁰⁹

Here Kant acknowledges this line of reasoning as “a need in our reason itself.” As one would expect, he criticizes the thought that this need constitutes a demonstration of the existence of God—a thought underlying, he says, all of Mendelssohn’s proofs in *Morgenstunden*—but he does not say here, as he does in the first *Critique*, that the line of reasoning is itself entangled in dialectical illusion. His reservation is, rather, that “we must not give out what is in fact only a necessary *presupposition* as if it were a *free insight*.”

The suggestion is that the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction should be seen as a rethinking whose possibility is first made clear by post-1781 developments in Kant’s thinking.¹¹⁰ Such a rethinking would not be without parallel, for the insight one acquires in the Transcendental Analytic into the determination of sensibility by the understanding enables a rethinking of the Transcendental Aesthetic.¹¹¹ Indeed, the general possibility of such rethinking is illuminated by what has been said about the modal

109. Kant (1900–), WHD, 8: 138n.

110. I leave open here the details of the developmental story. As is well-known, Kant left the *Dialectic* almost entirely unrevised in 1786–1787, so it is no objection to my claim that Kant did not revise the Transcendental Ideal for the B edition.

111. See, for example, Longuenesse (1998), 213: “The goal of the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories is ‘fully attained’ only when it leads to a rereading of the Transcendental Aesthetic.” See also 298–303.

character of the distinction between the faculties. Suppose there are two modally distinct faculties, each with a really distinct use. If one examines the dependent faculty first, in light of its really distinct use, then one may be said to examine it as if it were a really distinct faculty. When, however, it is subsequently established that the dependent faculty is unintelligible without reference to the faculty on which it is dependent, then one's previously attained view of the lower faculty will have to be rethought in light of one's new insight. Since, as I have argued, there are modal distinctions both between the faculties of specifically human sensibility and understanding, and between understanding and reason, it should be clear why, in both cases, the examination of the latter faculty enables a deeper insight into the former.

What would a Metaphysical Deduction from the idea of God be like? As far as I know, Kant never attempts to carry it out. However, without attempting a complete reconstruction, we can see what the shape of the derivation would be if we pay attention to connections between three regions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the Metaphysical Deduction, the Transcendental Ideal, and the Amphiboly.

There is an implicit connection, made explicit in several Reflexionen, between the Metaphysical Deduction, in which the categories are derived, and the Transcendental Ideal, in which the idea of God is derived.¹¹² This connection can be brought out through consideration of Kant's argument for the distinction between negative judgment and infinite judgment within transcendental logic.

Kant agrees with Georg Friedrich Meier, whose book provides the basis for Kant's lectures on logic, that there is no distinction to be made, within general logic, between an affirmative judgment and an infinite judgment such as "the soul is non-mortal," in which the predicate involves a negation, but the copula is not negated, as it is in a negative judgment such as "the soul is not mortal."¹¹³ For "General logic abstracts from all content of the predicate (even if it is negative), and considers only whether it is attributed to the subject or opposed to it."¹¹⁴ That is, general logic is concerned only with the forms of the synthesis of subject-concepts and predicate-concepts,

112. See Longuenesse (1998), 295–296, who cites R3063, perhaps composed in 1776–1778.

113. Meier, *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (*Extract from the Doctrine of Reason*) (Halle, 1752), #294, reprinted in Kant (1900–), 16: 635.

114. Kant (1900–), KrV, A72/B97.

and with the combinations of those forms in syllogisms, without paying any attention whatsoever to the content of the concepts involved, in particular to whether those concepts are *real*—that is, capable of rendering objects intelligible. However, Kant argues, *transcendental* logic must distinguish infinite from affirmative judgments. For transcendental logic is concerned with the forms of synthesis of subject-concepts and predicate-concepts into judgments insofar as the resulting judgments are capable of rendering objects intelligible. So transcendental logic must pay attention to the contents of concepts, to their reality. And the object-intelligibility achieved through infinite judgments differs from the object-intelligibility achieved through affirmative judgments. In an affirmative judgment, such as “the soul is simple,” the sphere of the subject-concept is included in the definite sphere of the predicate-concept, and the soul is posited within a definite region of the space of real possibilities or possible entities. Thus, we might say, the soul is rendered *definitely* intelligible. But this is not the kind of intelligibility achieved through an infinite judgment such as “the soul is non-mortal”:

Now by means of the proposition “the soul is non-mortal” I have certainly made an actual affirmation as far as logical form is concerned, for I have placed the soul within the unlimited domain of undying beings. Now since that which is mortal contains one part of the whole domain of possible beings, but that which is undying the other, nothing is said by my proposition but that the soul is one of the infinite multitude of things that remain if I take away everything that is mortal. But the infinite sphere of the possible is thereby limited only to the extent that that which is mortal is separated from it, and the soul is placed in the remaining space of its domain. But even with this exception this space still remains infinite, and more parts could be taken away from it without the concept of the soul growing in the least and being affirmatively determined.¹¹⁵

Through an infinite judgment, we might say, a real possibility is rendered *indefinitely* intelligible. For it is posited within what Kant thinks of as the space of real possibilities. But it is posited outside a definite region of that space, in an indefinitely large area. In Kant’s logical terminology, the sphere of the subject-concept is included in the infinite sphere external to that of the concept whose negation constitutes the predicate-concept.

Now, when Kant speaks of the exhaustive division of “the whole exten-

115. Kant (1900–), KrV, A72/B97.

sion of possible beings" into the mortal and the non-mortal, he is implicitly invoking what, in the Transcendental Ideal, he calls *the principle of thoroughgoing determination*,¹¹⁶ and he makes this connection explicit in R3063. As Kant puts it in the *Critique*:

Every thing, however, as to its possibility . . . stands under the principle of *thoroughgoing determination*; according to which, among *all possible* predicates of things, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it. This does not rest merely on the principle of contradiction, for besides considering every thing in relation to two contradictorily conflicting predicates, it considers every thing further in relation to *the whole of possibility*, as the sum total of all predicates of things in general; and by presupposing that as a condition *a priori*, it represents every thing as deriving its own possibility from the share it has in that whole of possibility. The principle of thoroughgoing determination thus deals with the content and not merely the logical form. It is the principle of the synthesis of all predicates which are to make up the complete concept of a thing, and not merely of the analytical representation, through one of two opposed predicates, and it contains a transcendental presupposition, namely that of the material *of all possibility*, which is supposed to contain *a priori* the data for the *particular* possibility of every thing.¹¹⁷

Clearly, Kant is concerned here, once again, with the difference between general and transcendental logic. There are two significant differences between the transcendental principle of thoroughgoing determination and the general logical principle of contradiction. First, the transcendental principle is concerned with real, not merely logical, possibilities. It concerns "every thing . . . as to its possibility." Thus the opposing predicates to which it applies must express reality or intelligibility of some being. Kant illustrates this point by means of a familiar example taken from Meier: he uses the expression "non-mortal" to draw a distinction between a (general) logical negation of a copula and the transcendental negation of a concept.¹¹⁸

116. On this principle, see Wood (1978), 42–44, and Friedman (1992a), 300–310.

117. Kant (1900–), KrV, A572–573/B600–601.

118. However, the Transcendental Ideal seems to mark a different—perhaps earlier—line of thought than the Metaphysical Deduction. First, Kant distinguishes between the transcendental and the logical, and does not seem to distinguish between two types of logic, the transcendental and the general. Second, although Kant distinguishes negation of the copula from negation of the predicate-concept, he does not seem to regard the latter as indicating infinite judgment, but as signifying "a mere lack."

However, here he mentions only negative judgments, in which the subject-concept is negated because it does not express "reality (thinghood)," but rather "non-being in itself . . . a mere lack . . . the removal of every thing." He does not mention infinite judgments, in which the predicate-concept is negated.

Second, unlike the principle of contradiction, the principle of thorough-going determination has "a transcendental presupposition": "*the sum-total of all possibility*" or "the collective possibility . . . the *allness (universitas)* or the sum total of all possible predicates." The idea here is that things are thoroughly determined, not merely with respect to *any given* pair of opposed predicates—that is, to any pair of opposed predicates between which we have the opportunity to decide, say in virtue of some experience—but rather with respect to *every possible* pair of opposed predicates. We find here, in effect, another expression of the Leibnizian Principle of Sufficient Reason. For the idea is that everything is determined, as it were, *in advance*, with respect to every possible pair of opposed predicates, by its essence or absolutely intrinsic properties, thus by its transcendently real possibility. That is to say, there is an absolute and unconditioned reason why every possible thing has every predicate that is possible for it. To grasp this absolute and unconditioned reason would be, as Kant says in Leibnizian language, to grasp "the complete concept of a thing."¹¹⁹

According to this conception of hypothetical necessity, every possible thing is individuated and so distinguished from every other possible thing, in virtue of its concept alone. Thus there is a conceptual space within which every possible thing has its own determinate location. We must not forget that the idea of such a conceptual space is an expression of reason's demand for an escape from the Agrippan trilemma and does not follow analytically from the mere concept of a thing. There is no contradiction in the thought that *possible* things are not completely determined, or that things are individuated from one another only when they are *actual*. This is exactly the

119. Thus the complete concept of an individual thing is not, as one might have thought, equivalent to a list of all the predicates of that thing, but is rather composed of those predicates of the thing that explain the pertinence to it of all other pertinent predicates. This has been argued by Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1999). See, for example, 172–173: "Leibniz understands individual concepts as standing in an explanatory relation to the predicates of an individual, as presumably no list or conjunction stands to its members." An *adæquate* interpretation of Leibniz' account of truth, as the *containment* of the predicate-concept in the subject-concept, must construe the containment relation as explanatory, not as merely deductive.

case, Kant argues, with empirical reality. Objects of possible experience are in principle not completely determinable in advance via absolutely intrinsic properties, for those properties can never be given through our senses, whose form is space and time. Objects that are actually given through the senses are individuated, not through their concepts alone but through their relationship to other objects in space and time, and indeed to the spatial framework enduring in time. As Kant explains in the *Amphiboly*, Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles is true of the objects of pure understanding but not of the objects of possible experience:

If an object is presented to us several times, but always with the same inner determinations (*qualitas et quantitas*), then it is always exactly the same if it counts as an object of pure understanding, not many but only one thing (*numerica identitas*); but if it is appearance, then the issue is not the comparison of concepts, but rather, however identical everything may be in regard to that, the difference of the places of these appearances at the same time is still an adequate ground for the *numerical difference* of the object (of the senses) itself. Thus, in the case of two drops of water one can completely abstract from all inner difference (of quality and quantity), and it is enough that they be intuited in different places at the same time in order for them to be held to be numerically different.¹²⁰

Empirically, real objects can differ *only numerically*, in virtue of their different relations to the irreducibly relational frameworks of space and time, without any determining conceptual difference, thus without any absolute reason appealing to the essences of the objects in question. That is one manifestation of the vulnerability of empirical reality, considered on its own, to Agrippan skepticism.

Now, a sum-total of all possibility cannot subsist on its own without some actual ground, any more than a single possibility can. So reason demands an actual ground in what may be called a most real being (*ens realissimum*) or an original being (*ens originarium*) or the being of all beings (*ens entium*). This being may be identified as God:

Now if we pursue this idea of ours so far as to hypostatize it, then we will be able to determine the original being through the mere concept of the highest reality as a being that is singular, simple, all-sufficient, eternal, etc., in a word, we will be able to determine it in its unconditioned com-

120. Kant (1900-), KrV, A263-264/B319-320.

pleteness through all predications. The concept of such a being is that of God thought of in a transcendental sense, and thus the ideal of pure reason is the object of a transcendental *theology*.¹²¹

In the *Critique*, Kant does not explore this determination in detail, but it is explicated elsewhere as central to his pre-critical thinking. For my purposes, I will summarize the idea in the terms Kant used in his 1786 response to Mendelssohn: we may ascribe to God all and only those absolutely intrinsic properties that are *absolutely infinite*, so that every real predicate of every possible finite thing in itself is either the limitation of a divine predicate or the consequence of such a limitation. Thus it is not only that the ascription of every possible real predicate, rather than its opposite, is grounded in the absolutely intrinsic properties of some transcendently possible thing. These absolutely intrinsic properties—that is to say, the transcendental possibilities of things, or the concepts of things in themselves—are in turn grounded in the idea of God.

We are now in a position to reverse direction and to reconceive the Metaphysical Deduction as a derivation from an absolute first principle. One would begin with the idea of God as *ens realissimum*, as the absolutely infinite ground of the *omnitudo realitas*. To the *ens realissimum* must be ascribed the maximal realities—that is, those intrinsic properties, first, that involve no negation whatsoever and thus survive what Kant calls the *via negationis*, and, second, that are raised to an infinite degree in what he calls the *via eminentiae*.¹²² By now limiting these absolutely infinite real properties that have been ascribed to God, one derives all possible transcendently real properties of finite things. This limitation would in principle yield complete concepts of possible things in themselves. At this stage, however, a second limitation is required. For the complete concepts of things could only be grasped by an infinite intellect, which Kant thinks may be ascribed to God. But we have only finite intellect—that is to say, a discursive understanding, whose spontaneity alone can supply only *empty forms*. Thus we are dependent on something other than our own spontaneity—on the capacity to receive what is given to us—for the *matter* of our cognition, whereas God is the ground of both form and matter. This second limitation would enable the derivation of both general and transcendental logic.

121. Kant (1900–), KrV, A580/B608.

122. Kant (1900–), VpR, 28: 1022.

The resulting basic concepts of transcendental logic—the pure categories—might be called incomplete concepts of things in themselves. These concepts alone do not suffice to individuate every possible thing, or to determine, with respect to every possible thing, the ascription of one of each possible pair of opposed real predicates. As so derived, “our concepts of things in themselves” are not fully determinate. Consequently, the categories are Janus-faced. We may use them to think things in themselves—that is, we may use them as incomplete versions of the concepts of things that are thoroughly determined, of infinitely intelligible things that are individuated merely by their locations in the conceptual space of all transcendently real possibilities. When we use categories in this way, our thoughts are empty forms through which we cannot determine and know any objects. But we consider this emptiness as manifesting our finitude, as expressing our inability to provide the matter supplied by God for His own cognition. Alternatively, we may use our pure categories, which are not fully determinate, to think *possible things that are not fully determinate* and that are individuated only insofar as they are actualized. When we use categories in this way, our thoughts are empty forms through which we *can* determine and know objects, provided that the matter for our cognition is provided through receptivity. Thus, categories may be used in two ways: either to think but not to determine or know things in themselves, or to think and possibly to determine and to know appearances.

Returning to the scholastic terminology of the previous section, it now seems that the distinction between the faculties of understanding and reason is *modal*: reason is intelligible without reference to (finite, discursive) understanding, but understanding is unintelligible without reference to reason.

Now, it is essential to note that to undertake this reconceived Metaphysical Deduction is *not* to return to Leibnizian Derivability Monism. There are three crucial differences, both made possible by Kant’s doctrine of the faculties.

First, Kant’s doctrine is more modest because, according to the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction, the derivation is merely partial. The most one could hope to derive would be the general concept of a manifold of matter given for cognition, *not* the specific forms in which matter can be given to us human beings. So the intelligible does not determine—does not provide sufficient reason for—the sensible, as it must in Leibniz’s view. Thus, for example, it remains an entirely open question at this stage

whether those forms constitute an irreducibly relational framework—hence, whether what is given by means of those forms could manifest things as they are in themselves, albeit incompletely. There is no direct argument from the discursivity of the human understanding to the transcendental idealist thesis that we cannot have any theoretical knowledge whatsoever of things in themselves. An argument for this thesis would require additional premises about the forms of specifically human sensibility.

Second, it should be noted that, nevertheless, Kant's doctrine is in a way more ambitious than Leibniz's doctrine. For the Kantian derivation should actually be possible for us to carry out. It is not merely a matter, as in Leibniz, of our grasping the possibility of a derivation that only God could perform. Put another way, Kant's version of Derivation Monism is internal to the human standpoint.

Third, the terms of the derivation-relation are quite different in the Leibnizian and Kantian cases. For Leibniz, the relation must hold between *property instantiations or facts*: every relational property instantiation must be derivable in principle from some nonrelational property instantiation. For Kant, the relation must hold between *basic concepts of reality or categories*: the forms employed for the cognition of that which is empirically real—which turns out, in light of the forms of specifically human sensibility to be irreducibly relational—must be actually derivable from the forms employed for the thought of that which is transcendently real, which must have some intrinsic properties. To employ a distinction made available by the Kantian doctrine of the faculties, what is derived in the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction is not the faculty of understanding's *exercises* with respect to the empirical world—relational property-ascriptions—but rather the *faculty* of understanding with respect to the empirical world—the general capacity for relational property-ascriptions. More precisely, the forms of judgment or the categories, which make relational property ascriptions possible, are derived from the forms of absolutely positive reality, which are grounded in the idea of God as *ens realissimum*.

Consequently, the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction promises help against Agrippan skepticism, although not, perhaps, the kind of help one might have expected. For we may say that empirical reality is derived from transcendental reality by limitation. So we may say that, in this sense, empirical reality is a derivative or limited version of transcendental reality and that the former is grounded in the latter. We are not entitled to any

claims, even in principle, about the determination of particular relational property instantiations by intrinsic property instantiations. But we may nevertheless say that the *forms* of empirical reality are grounded in the *forms* of transcendental reality. It is this, and this alone, that we are entitled to mean if we say that things in themselves are the things that appear in empirical phenomena.

I am now in a position to respond to a textual objection that proponents of the Two Methods and Two Aspects interpretations could raise. The objection is that there are passages in which Kant seems clearly to speak in ways that seem incompatible with the idea that transcendental reality and empirical reality constitute two distinct conceptions of the essence of things. For example:

The object is to be taken in a *twofold sense*, namely as appearance and as thing in itself; if the deduction of the concepts of understanding is valid, and the principle of causality therefore applies only to things taken in the former sense, namely, insofar as they are objects of experience—these same objects, taken in the other sense, not being subject to the principle—then there is no contradiction in supposing that one and the same will is, in the appearance, that is, in its visible acts, necessarily subject to the law of nature, and so far *not free*, while yet, as belonging to a thing in itself, it is not subject to that law, and is therefore *free*.¹²³

This object as *appearance* is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself.¹²⁴

The very same being which, as outer appearance, is extended, [may be] (in itself) internally a subject, and is not composite, but is simple and thinks.¹²⁵

In my view, such passages are metaconceptual or, if you like, meta-categorical.¹²⁶ The point is that the very same *concepts of an object*, or the very same categories, may be employed *both* to cognize an appearance *and* to think a thing in itself. Thus the grounding of natural events, although it is deterministic in Kant's view, can be derivative—in the sense supplied

123. Kant (1900–), KrV, Bxxvii–xxviii.

124. Kant (1900–), KrV, A35/B51.

125. Kant (1900–), KrV, A360.

126. Cf. Van Cleve (1999), 144–146, who regards the language as metalinguistic, which commits him to less than my view commits me to.

ultimately by the reconceived Metaphysical Deduction—from the grounding of actions in transcendentally real, free agents.

1.8

The story of Kant's reconceived Metaphysical Deduction should be instructive for the assessment of the Kantian origins of German idealism. For here we see a crucial element of Kant's pre-critical project—the proof of God's existence as *ens realissimum*—resurfacing within the critical philosophy, in a way that does not undermine either the basic notion of Kantian dualism or the doctrine of the faculties. And it is here—not, I suggest, in Kant's pre-critical versions of Leibniz's Derivability Monism—that we can find a Kantian source for the Derivation Monism of the German idealists. Like Kant, the German idealists are concerned with an actual derivation, not with our grasp of the possibility in principle of a derivation performable only by God. Like Kant again, the German idealists are concerned with the derivation of categories, not of facts.

My claim is not that the German idealists are directly influenced by the Kantian texts to which I have appealed—although this could be true. My claim rather is that the German idealists, like Kant, are concerned with the problem of simultaneously satisfying both the Duality Demand and the Monistic Demand. So it is to be expected that developments below the surface of Kant's own thinking about this problem should be paralleled by developments in the thinking of his philosophically creative readers.

Given this way of thinking about the origin of German idealist Derivation Monism, we should *not* expect a German idealist derivation to look like a deductive proof from a premise or axiom. This expectation is fulfilled. In Fichte's prospectus, for example, he says much about what a first principle is supposed to do for us, and he seems to say frustratingly little about what it is. But he gives a clue to which we should now be attuned when he cites geometry as an example of a particular science with its own first principle, which is, however, in some sense derivative from the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: "The first principle of geometry is the overall task of limiting space in accordance with a rule, or the task of spatial construction."¹²⁷ Thus the first principle is not, as one might have thought, the

127. Fichte (1964–), ÜBWL, I/2: 42.

conjunction of the Euclidean axioms. Instead, it is the task of determining space by limitation, which may be regarded as derivative from the task of determining the *omnitude realitatis*. For Fichte in the 1794–1795 *Foundations*, it turns out, it is not God but rather “the absolute I” that is the *ens realissimum*.¹²⁸ In Schelling’s early essays, the same reconstrual of Kant’s Transcendental Ideal is also evident, while the importance of the Ideal for understanding both Hegel’s early notion of transcendental intuition and Schelling’s late philosophy of the world ages has recently been pointed out.¹²⁹

One important consequence is that it ceases to be difficult to answer the question, “Why only one first principle?” For, as this question is often asked, it is wrongly assumed to be equivalent to the question, “Why only one axiom rather than several?” Once it is understood that the first principle is not an axiom, but is instead what constitutes the unity of an intelligible domain of objects, then it becomes clear that the uniqueness of the principle corresponds to the unity of the domain in question. Neither Kant nor the German idealists see the uniqueness of the principle, so understood, as controversial and in need of justification. For the monotheistic view that only a unique God could be the ground of a unique world had been long established, on the basis of various arguments. Against this background, we can also understand the German idealist view of the special status of philosophy. Although there are several sciences, each science must be concerned with a unified domain of objects and must therefore have a unique principle. These principles are unconditioned only relative to the domains of the special sciences. The unity of the sciences is understood in terms of the derivativeness of these principles of the special sciences from an absolutely unconditioned first principle, with which philosophy is concerned.

Another important consequence of the idea that German idealists seek to realize the program, envisaged by Kant himself, of a Metaphysical Deduction from the idea of God, is that we can see why their works often take the form of a derivation of the categories.¹³⁰

Highly important questions remain open about the envisioned deriva-

128. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), GW, I/2: 99: “No possible A . . . (no *thing*) can be anything other than something posited in the I”; Schelling (1856–1861), VIPP, I/1: 186: “The I contains *all being, all reality*.”

129. On Hegel, see, for example, Longuenesse (2000). On Schelling, see, for example, Hogrebe (1989).

130. See, for example, Fichte, GWL and WLnM; Schelling, ÜMFP; and Hegel, WL and EL.

tion. First, what is the status of the first principle? So far, I have spoken only of derivation from the *idea* of God, not from the *existence* of God. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant presents the existence of God as a postulate of pure practical reason, while, in the *Opus Postumum*, he says that only the idea of God is at stake, not any existence outside that idea.¹³¹ Whether this is a shift in Kant's thinking need not be argued here.¹³² What is important for my purposes is that the status of the first principle is an open question, and that the same question is in fact raised, not only about German idealist systems, but also within those systems—especially in response to criticisms of Reinhold's pioneering version, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

Second, what is the nature of the steps in the derivation? In the derivation sketched above, these steps are conceived as limitations. But why are absolutely infinite realities limited, giving rise to finite things in themselves, and why is an absolutely infinite understanding limited, giving rise to finite rational beings? Again, what is important for my purposes is that the same question is addressed within German idealist systems.¹³³

Third, how extensive are the results of the derivation? For instance, could one derive, if not the distinctively Euclidean features of the forms of specifically human sensibility, nevertheless *some* features of any manifold of given matter capable of enabling the individuation of objects?¹³⁴ Again, the same question arises with respect to derivations of space within German idealist systems.

This means that Derivation Monism is not necessarily opposed to Kantian dualism. Indeed, the German idealists inherit the core of Kantian dualism, which I would now formulate as follows: there are two structures of grounding, (A) such that one is subject to the Agrippan trilemma while the

131. Förster (2000).

132. For an argument that it is not a shift, see Guyer (2000). For an earlier debate on this topic, see Vaihinger (1911), 724, 731, 772; Adickes (1920), 709, 720, 785, 801, 804, 811; and the discussion of this debate in Schrader (1951), from whom the earlier references are cited.

133. Thus Fichte (1964–), *WLNm*, IV/2: 44, asks: "The postulate states: *The I appears outside of itself, as it were, and makes itself into an object. Why should and why must the I do this?*" And thus Schelling (1856–1861), *PBDK*, I/1: 294, reformulates the Kantian question about the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments as the question: "How do I ever come to egress from the absolute, and to progress towards an opposite?"

134. See, for example, the derivation of general concepts of space and time as constituting a framework for the individuation of empirical objects given by Maimon and the remarkably similar derivation given by Strawson (1992), 54–57 and Strawson (1997), 45–56.

other escapes it, and (B) such that the basic concepts employed in the articulation of the former structure are derivative from the basic concepts employed in the articulation of the latter. For the German idealists conceive the relationship between the empirical or ordinary standpoint and the transcendental or speculative standpoint in just this way. They, too, seek to carry out a deduction of the categories that will demonstrate the absolute grounding of empirical knowledge without compromising the mutual closure of transcendental and empirical reasoning.¹³⁵

As for Kant's doctrine of the faculties, when it is not interpreted as involving real distinctions between faculties, and when the shifts in Kant's own thinking are recognized, it can be seen to create room for Derivation Monism as an account of the grounding relationship between what is empirically real and what is transcendently real. Indeed, some version of this view seems called for if there is to be a fully satisfying response to Agrippan skepticism about the empirical world. So some light has been shed on the motivation for the German idealist program of systematization, although much more is yet to be provided.

135. When mutual closure is not respected, antinomies result, which can be resolved only through an adequate appreciation of the distinction between the transcendental and empirical standpoints, and the related distinction between two registers of meaning. The conflict between realism and idealism is one such antinomy. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), *WLNm*, IV/2: 27: "The idealist observes how there come to be things for the individual. Thus the situation is different for the individual than it is for the philosopher. The individual is confronted with things, men, etc., that are independent of him. But the idealist says, 'There are no things outside of me and present independently of me.' Though the two say opposite things, they do not contradict each other. For the idealist, from his own viewpoint, displays the necessity of the individual's view. When the idealist says 'outside of me,' he means 'outside of reason': when the individual says the same thing, he means 'outside of my person.' The viewpoint of the individual can be called 'the ordinary point of view,' or 'the viewpoint of experience.'" Similarly, Schelling and Hegel write in the introduction to their *Critical Journal*, reprinted in Hegel (1970), 2: 282: "Philosophy is, by its very nature, something esoteric, neither made for the vulgar as it stands, nor capable of being got up to suit the vulgar taste; it only is philosophy in virtue of being directly opposed to the understanding and hence even more opposed to healthy common sense, under which label we understand the limitedness in space and time of a generation of men; in its relationship to common sense the world of philosophy is an inverted world . . . philosophy must certainly admit the possibility that the people can rise to it, but it must not lower itself to the people." I will say more about the self-confessed, esoteric character of German idealism in Chapter 5. Although the views of Schelling and Hegel develop considerably after 1802, and although their views diverge on, among other things, how to explain and negotiate the obscurity of German idealism, neither abandons the basic point that I emphasize here: that experience is to be grounded in a philosophical account whose conception of grounding is discontinuous with—and apparently contradictory to—the conception of grounding that is operative within experience.

Derivation Monism, then, is not *necessarily* incompatible with Kantian dualism. However, *specific* versions of Derivation Monism, which can allow only rational distinctions between exercises of faculties, *are* incompatible with Kant's doctrine of the faculties, or with his fundamental dualism, or with both. Only versions that allow real distinctions between exercises of faculties can be compatible with Kant's doctrine of the faculties, and only versions that allow a modal distinction between empirical and pure uses of the categories, can be compatible with his fundamental dualism.

The fact that Kantian dualism is compatible with some versions of Derivation Monism does not show that Kant is a German idealist. It shows, rather, that taking Kant's Copernican turn plus maintaining Derivation Monism is insufficient to make one a German idealist. For, as I shall argue in the chapters to come, the deeper differences between Kant and German idealism do not concern the dualistic relationship between the transcendental and the empirical. Those deeper differences concern, rather, how each of the relata is conceived. The next two chapters will deal with the transcendental and with the empirical, respectively, focusing on the transformed set of problems confronting the German idealists in the wake of the Spinozism controversy.

Post-Kantian Monism

Spinozism is, in the field of metaphysics, what Catholicism is in the field of hyperphysics—the most systematic version.

—Reinhold (1786–1787), IV, BKP, 137

I further observe, that if we go beyond the *I am*, we necessarily arrive at Spinozism (that, when fully thought out, the system of Leibniz is nothing other than Spinozism, is shown in a valuable essay by Salomon Maimon . . .); and that there are only two completely consistent systems: the *critical*, which recognizes this boundary, and the *Spinozistic*, which oversteps it.

—Fichte (1764–), I/2, GW 101

Now for a reply to your question as to whether I believe we cannot get to a personal being by means of the moral proof. . . . For you the question has surely long since been decided. For us as well the orthodox concepts of God are no more. My reply is that we get even *further* than a personal Being. I have in the interim become a Spinozist! Do not be astonished. You will soon hear how.

—Schelling, Letter to Hegel, February 4, 1795
in Hegel (1953), Briefe I, Letter 9

Spinoza is the high point of modern philosophy. Either Spinozism or no philosophy.

—Hegel (1970), 20, VGP: 163–164

It is hard to comprehend how the scholars just mentioned could have found support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

—Kant (1900–), WHD, 8:143n

Here, as elsewhere, Leibniz fell into Spinozism whenever he allowed himself to be logical; in his published works, accordingly, he took care to be illogical.

—Russell (1900, 1937), Preface to the Second Edition, vii

2.1

A version of monism to which German idealists are committed is incompatible with one of Kant's fundamental commitments. I will call it Holistic Monism, which is distinct from the Derivation Monism discussed in Chapter 1. Derivation Monism is the requirement that, in an adequate philosophical system, the *a priori* conditions of experience must be somehow derived from a single, absolute first principle. Holistic Monism may be divided into two requirements. The Holistic requirement is that, in an adequate philosophical system, empirical items must be such that all their properties are determinable only within the context of a totality composed of other items and their properties.¹ The Monistic requirement is that, in an adequate philosophical system, the absolute first principle must be immanent within the aforementioned totality, as its principle of unity.² The two requirements together entail, first, that the absolute first principle both necessitates its derivatives and is impossible without them and, second,

1. Schelling (1856–1861), *WI*, ÜMFP: 107, expresses the commitment to Holism in this sense by making an astute point about the difference between Kant's table of the categories and the German idealist table developed by Fichte and by Schelling himself: "If one looks closely at Kant's table of these forms, then indeed one finds that, instead of placing the original form as the principle of the other forms, Kant placed it among others, as one on a par with them. On more careful investigation one finds not only that the forms of *relation* are the foundation of all others but also that they are really identical with the original form (the analytic, the synthetic, and the two combined)." Kant's inclusion of the relational categories of causality and community is already controversial, since it is legitimate only on the assumption that things in themselves can be thought as interacting causally and even as in causal community—an assumption for which he had argued, against Leibnizian opposition, in his pre-critical writings. But the German idealists go still further and make the relational categories—substantiality, causality, and community—into the foundational categories from which to derive the rest. The relevant categorial principles are equivalent to the first three principles of Fichte's 1794 *Foundations*: "I posit myself as self-positing," "I posit the not-I," and "I posit the divisible not-I in opposition to the divisible I." Thus not only is it possible, as for Kant, to think community through the categories, but it is impossible, for the German idealists, to think any determinate thing that is not in community. Intrinsic properties are therefore unthinkable.

2. Commitment to Monism in this sense may be more obvious in the case of Schelling and Hegel, who explicitly acknowledge their debts to Spinoza, than in the case of Fichte. One expression of Fichte's commitment may be seen in a central feature of his methodology, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5. It is the idea that the absolute first principle⁴ is first insofar as it is empty on its own and cannot be concretely realized unless further conditions are satisfied. Although the first principle cannot be realized without these conditions, the conditions are nevertheless derivative from the principle because they can be derived in a deduction that begins with the principle, whereas the principle cannot be derived in a deduction that begins with its conditions.

that, between the principle and its derivatives, there can be no real distinctions.

Now this view conflicts with what may be called Monadic Individualism: the thesis that properties can be instantiated only if they are borne by individuals, which possess some intrinsic properties. This thesis is to be distinguished from the monadological view that properties must be borne by individuals which have *only* intrinsic properties. Kant is committed to Monadic Individualism on two levels. First, as we have seen, even in the critical period, Kant maintains that, supposing the intelligibility of the world, things in themselves must be individuals in the way Monadic Individualism requires. This is Kant's critical inheritance of the Leibnizian notion of hypothetical necessity. Turning from theoretical to practical philosophy, we find, second, that, in Kant's view, the self-conception required for moral action is a conception of myself as an individual with some intrinsic properties—notably, a will that is capable of autonomy.

This parting of the ways—which, as we shall see, is far more complex than I have so far suggested—comes about through the remarkable influence of the Jacobi–Mendelssohn controversy and, more specifically, through the unintended success of Jacobi's presentation of Spinozism in 1785. Jacobi's *goal* may be to discredit the enlightenment by showing that it leads inexorably to Spinozism and other horrible consequences, as Lessing, the German enlightenment's most farsighted thinker, had realized. But Jacobi's *effect* is to convince an entire generation that Spinoza may no longer be treated as a “dead dog,” but should instead be regarded as the most rigorous of all the great figures in the history of philosophy. Of course, not everyone whom Jacobi has convinced of Spinoza's greatness also thinks that one should be a Spinozist. Indeed, Reinhold—the first German idealist—brought Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to the attention of a large audience for the first time when, in his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, he presented the doctrine of moral religion in the *Critique* as the only possible *alternative* to Spinozism. Although the *Critique* had been written by Kant and read by Jacobi before the Spinozism controversy, its fate is to be read by many—including those who will soon be German idealists—in the new context inaugurated by Jacobi, a context significantly different from that in which the *Critique* had been written.

Jacobi may be seen as transforming the philosophical context in two ways. First, he establishes Spinozism, which had been a negligible position when Kant wrote the *Critique*, as the principal pre-Kantian option for re-

solving the problems discussed in the last chapter: the Agrippan trilemma, the Leibnizian problem, and the Newtonian/Humean problem, to all of which Kantian dualism may be seen as responding. Second, he institutes a new way of seeing those problems: as part of a general problematic of the nihilism of philosophy, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

This chapter will deal with Jacobi's remarkable success in putting Spinozism on the map of viable philosophical positions. Thanks to Jacobi, by the time the German idealists write their major works, they have become convinced that *any* viable philosophical position must be committed to Holistic Monism, one of Spinozism's distinctive features. Indeed, it has become so self-evident to them that they offer little or no argument on its behalf. In this chapter, I will reconstruct the motivation for Holistic Monism by focusing on two stages in the reception of the first *Critique*. At the first stage, readers of the *Critique*, under Jacobi's influence, think that Kant himself either is, *should*, or at least *could* be a Spinozist committed to Holistic Monism. At the second stage, Kant himself—if not under Jacobi's influence, then on the occasion forced upon him by Jacobi—comes to a new appreciation of Spinozism. Beginning with the *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788, Kant argues that a transcendental realist, who is developing a theoretical account of hypothetical necessity, should be, not a Leibnizian, as Kant would have said before the Spinozism controversy, but rather a Spinozist. Thus Spinozism is the greatest rival of Kant's own transcendental idealism. But the latter, Kant also argues, has decisive theoretical advantages over the former. By reconstructing an argument that emerges from the first stage—an argument to the effect that Kant could be a Spinozist—as well as an argument that emerges from the second stage—a *failed* argument to the effect that transcendental idealism defeats Spinozism within theoretical philosophy, I hope to show why Fichte and Schelling come to think that Spinozism cannot be refuted by either Kantian or Fichtean idealism on theoretical grounds, a thesis from which they draw conclusions whose difference may be seen as representing the schism between Fichte on the one hand and Schelling and Hegel on the other.

2.2

At the beginning of the Spinozism controversy, it is far from clear whether Kant will become involved. It is even unclear on which side he would intervene if he *were* to participate. Thus in 1785, Kant receives numerous

letters begging him to enter the controversy, either against Jacobi or against Mendelssohn.³ One letter, from Christian Gottfried Schütz, editor of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* of Jena, which is just beginning to become a center for Kantianism, pleads with Kant

for a clarification, whether Mr. Privy Councillor Jacobi in his book on Spinoza has not misunderstood you, when he cites your ideas about space and says they are written *wholly in Spinoza's spirit*.

It is entirely incomprehensible how often you are misunderstood; there are people, who are actually not fools in other respects, who take you for an atheist.⁴

Schütz is referring to a footnote in which Jacobi cites the *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to explain Holistic Monism to Mendelssohn.⁵ Here is Jacobi's text, to which the footnote in question is attached:

VI. Hence [i.e., as a result of the argument Jacobi has just given, which I shall explore later] the finite is in the infinite, so that the sum of all finite things, equally containing within itself the whole of eternity at every moment, past and future, is one and the same as the infinite thing itself.

VII. This sum is not an absurd combination of finite things, together constituting an infinite, but a whole in the strictest sense, whose parts can only be thought within it and according to it.⁶

Paragraph VI is a statement of Spinoza's monism, as Jacobi understands it. It amounts to the view that the dependence of finite things upon the infinite is such that the *omnitude realitatis* is one and the same as the *ens realissimum*. But, as Jacobi hastens to explain in Paragraph VII, to say this is not to make the absurd claim that the aggregation of all finite things yields something that is infinite. Such a claim would presuppose that finite things are intelligible prior to their inclusion into the whole. Rather, in

3. Zammito (1992), 230–237.

4. Kant (1900–), B, 10: 430 (Letter from Christian Gottfried Schütz, February 1786). See also the letter from Johann Biester, 11 June 1786, Kant (1900–), 10: 453–458, arguing that Jacobi has already pulled Kant into the controversy. Biester, editor of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, is attempting to recruit Kant for the Berlin enlightenment's defense against Jacobi.

5. In another footnote, Jacobi makes a different association between Spinoza and Kant that seems to have attracted less immediate attention from critics. He suggests that what Spinoza calls "absolute thought," ascribed to God, may be illuminated by consideration of Kant's transcendental apperception or "original consciousness." See Jacobi (1998–), ÜLS (1785), 1: 105, n.1. It seems certain that this association exerted an enormous influence on those who were to become German idealists.

6. Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), 1: 95–96.

Spinoza's view, finite things are intelligible only in virtue of their position within the whole, which is therefore prior to its parts. In other words, finite things are *limitations* of the infinite whole.

To Paragraph VII, Jacobi adds the following footnote:

The following passages from Kant, which are entirely in the spirit of Spinoza, might serve for explanation: "... we can represent to ourselves only one space; and if we speak of diverse spaces, we mean thereby only parts of one and the same unique space. Secondly, these parts cannot precede the one all-embracing space, as being, as it were, constituents out of which it can be composed; on the contrary, they can be thought only as in it. Space is essentially one; the manifold in it, and therefore the general concept of spaces, depend solely on limitations . . ." *Critique of Pure R.* [A]25; "The infinitude of time signifies nothing more than that every determinate magnitude of time is possible only through limitations one single time that underlies it. The original representation, *time*, must therefore be given as unlimited. But when an object is so given that its parts, and every quantity of it, can be determinately represented through limitation, the whole representation cannot be given through concepts, since they contain only partial representations (since in their case the partial representations come first); on the contrary, such concepts must themselves rest on immediate intuition." *Critique of Pure R.* [A]32.⁷

Adding yet another layer, Jacobi's footnote cites two passages from Spinoza "as accompaniment to these words of Kant."⁸ Jacobi does not explain these passages or their pertinence to Kant. But, in light of his general interpretation of Spinoza, he seems to think that the first passage shows that, just as Kant thinks of regions of space and spans of time as limitations of infinite wholes, so Spinoza thinks of what we ordinarily call things as possessing determinacy only insofar as they are limitations of a prior, infinite whole. And he seems to think that, according to the second passage, since only the infinite whole may properly be called a real being, what we ordinarily call things are "modes of thinking," which are neither beings nor "ideas of things," but "rather Nonbeings."

Ultimately, Kant responds to Schütz's request, when at last he enters the

7. Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), I: 96, n.1.

8. He cites properties 2–5 of the intellect from *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza (1925) 2: 39, Spinoza (2002), 29, and the paragraphs on the modes of thinking by which we imagine things, as well as the paragraph on beings of reason from the Appendix Containing Metaphysical Thoughts to *Descartes' "Principles of Philosophy"*, Spinoza (1925), 1: 234, Spinoza (2002), 178–179.

controversy in 1787, with the incredulous remark that "It is hard to comprehend how the scholars just mentioned could have found support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*."⁹ Before that, however, the issue is taken up by an anonymous review of Jacobi's book in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, probably written by Schütz himself:

Only one case is possible: either Mr. Jacobi or his reviewer has totally misunderstood Mr. Kant's sense and opinion in the cited passages. Mr. Kant says: there is only *one space*; Spinoza: there is only *one substance*. Kant says: all that we call *many spaces* are only parts of the *unique, all-encompassing space*; Spinoza: everything finite is one and the same as the infinite. How both speak here in the very same spirit, how Kant can here serve as elucidation for Spinoza, we do not in the least comprehend. Mr. Kant alone is in a position to decide this contradiction;—and since it matters much to us to understand him correctly, while on the other hand vanity does not compel us to want to understand him *better* than anyone else, then it will not cost us any victory if Mr. Jacobi consents to an exposition, so that he himself may indict us of our misunderstanding. However, we concede that, in the passage from Spinoza, which Mr. Jacobi quotes on p. 125, where he speaks of the concept of *quantity*, the thought that representations of line, surface and body do not comprehend quantity but rather only serve to delimit [it], has an affinity with Kant's thoughts about space.¹⁰

As the reviewer remarks, there is an affinity between Kant and Spinoza. For both have the notion of a whole that is prior to its parts, such that the parts are what they are as delimitations of the whole. This kind of part/whole relationship contrasts with the kind of relation pertaining between a discursive concept and its instances. Instances of a discursive concept may be thought of as parts composing a whole signified by the concept. As such, the parts are prior to the whole. Indeed, the passage cited by Jacobi from A25 is one of Kant's arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic for the thesis that space and time are not concepts, but rather intuitions. Thus Kant and Spinoza share the notion of a nonconceptual part/whole relation, according to which parts are individuated through their delimitation of the whole. One may even say that Kant could say of parts of space and time what Spinoza says of finite things: determination is negation.¹¹

9. Kant (1900–), WHD, 8: 143n.

10. *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 36, 11 February 1786, reprinted in Landau (1991), 272.

11. See Spinoza, Ep50, to Jarig Jelles, 2 June 1674, in Spinoza (2002), 892: "With regard to

Is that all the affinity amounts to? The reviewer seems to think so. After all, Kant is talking about space and Spinoza is talking about substance. Indeed, we might add, Kant is talking about appearances, whose grounding relations are subject to the Agrippan trilemma, whereas Spinoza is talking about the in itself, whose grounding relations must—as both Kant and Spinoza think—escape the trilemma. What connection could there be, then, between Kant's one space and Spinoza's one substance?

Jacobi does not say. More comfortable with highly suggestive remarks than with rigorous argumentation, he chooses to back off. In response to the review, he alters the footnote only slightly, so that, in the second edition of his Spinoza book, published in 1789, the texts from the *Critique* are introduced thus: "Kant may serve to render this concept more graspable. That the Kantian philosophy is not accused of Spinozism, one need not say to any sensible person."¹²

But Jacobi's suggestive remarks should not be dismissed lightly. There is more to the affinity than Jacobi's reviewer concedes. Jacobi seems to have noticed a genuine connection between the Transcendental Ideal and the Transcendental Aesthetic, between the *omnitude realitatis* of the in itself and the all-encompassing space and time of appearances.

Kant explicitly compares the *omnitude realitatis* and space, and the comparison concerns precisely the notion of the individuation of a part through the delimitation of a whole. Thus he says: "All manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, just as all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting space."¹³ For an infinite intellect, every possible thing would be individuated by its position within the *omnitude realitatis*,

the statement that figure is a negation and not anything positive, it is obvious that matter in its totality, considered without limitation, can have no figure, and that figure applies only to finite and determinate bodies. For he who says that he apprehends a figure, thereby means to indicate simply this, that he apprehends a determinate thing and the manner of its determination. This determination therefore does not pertain to the thing in regard to its being; on the contrary, it is its non-being. So since figure is nothing but determination, and determination is negation, figure can be nothing other than negation, as has been said." Jacobi (1998), *ÜLS* (1785), 100, cites this passage but removes the specific reference to figure. In his 1663 baccalaureate thesis, *Disputatio Metaphysica de Principio Individui*, Leibniz criticizes the view that negation is the principle of individuation, but "doubts strongly whether it has anyone to defend it, except, perhaps, some obscure nominalist." See McCullough (1996), 34–42.

12. Jacobi (1998), *ÜLS* (1789), 1: 96, editors' note 3–4.

13. Kant (1900–), *KrV*, A578/B606.

which would constitute something within an infinitely intelligible space of all transcendently real possibilities. Thus, "the thoroughgoing determination of every thing [in itself] rests on the limitation of this *All* of reality, in that some of it is ascribed to the thing and the rest excluded from it."¹⁴

We, however, possess only finite understanding. So we cannot in principle individuate objects in such a manner. Nevertheless, every object intelligible to us can be individuated by its career within space and/or time, thus within the single whole of possible experience. For us, then, the spatio-temporal whole of possible experience serves, we might say, as a *substitute* for the infinitely intelligible space that would individuate things in themselves for an infinite intellect.

Kant regards space and time as relational frameworks, so that they must be understood in relation to their possible occupants, while their possible occupants must be understood in relation to them. For this reason—and also because, Kant holds, anything in space and time is *ipso facto* within a Newtonian community of forces with everything else in space and time—empirical objects are "nothing but relations." Consequently, they are not things in themselves because, as I argued in the previous chapter, it is hypothetically necessary that things in themselves be individuated by their intrinsic properties, which determine their positions within the *omnitude realitatis*. Rather, empirical objects are individuated only by their careers within the relational frameworks of space and/or time. Consequently, Kant can agree with Holistic Monism on the *negative* thesis that what we ordinarily call things are not substances in the transcendental sense.

But this does not make Kant a Holistic Monist. For it does not mean that Kant agrees with the *positive* thesis that what we ordinarily call things are modes of a single substance in the transcendental sense: a single, infinitely intelligible whole. In the passages cited by Jacobi, Kant's point is, rather, that empirical objects are possible only within a whole whose grounding relations cannot escape the Agrippan trilemma. For possible experience is a merely distributive unity, not a collective unity such as the *omnitude realitatis*. There is no *absolute* ground of possible experience that plays the role of the *ens realissimum*.¹⁵ Although space and time are wholes

14. Kant (1900–), KrV, A577/B605. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the connection between space and the *omnitude realitatis* is emphasized in Kant's pre-critical philosophy, especially in the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

15. However, the ether with whose deduction Kant is concerned in the *Opus Postumum* is later supposed to play an analogue of that role. See Friedman (1992a), Förster (2000), and

that fully determine individual spaces and times, they do not fully determine empirical objects. Indeed, even space and time *together with the schematized categories* do not fully determine empirical objects, whose particularity is always contingent. Thus, to be aware of the forms of intuition and of finite understanding—hence of the forms of possible experience—is not to be able to derive and thus to anticipate the determinate objects that will be given to us in experience. So Kant is not committed to the view that empirical objects are merely parts or delimitations of the whole of possible experience. And Kant's possible experience can be equated with Spinoza's substance, only at the cost of destroying entirely Kant's dualism between the realm of appearances, whose grounding relations are subject to the Agrippan trilemma, and the realm of the in itself, whose grounding relations escape the trilemma.

It seems impossible to ascertain how much of this Jacobi intends. However, he is certainly familiar with Kant's views about the *omnitudo realitatis* and the *ens realissimum*,¹⁶ and it is possible that he intends only to suggest that Kant and Spinoza agree that negation—that is, the delimitation of a prior whole—plays an indispensable role in the individuation of empirical objects, which are therefore not transcendently real. If so, then Jacobi's suggestion is correct, and one can see a certain affinity—to be sure, not an equation—between transcendental idealism and the negative Spinozist thesis that what we ordinarily call things are not substances.

2.3

But some post-Jacobian readers of Kant are prepared to go still further. They see an affinity between the positive Spinozist thesis that there is only one substance and Kant's view about what is transcendently real in the intelligible world.

A striking example is Hermann Andreas Pistorius—of whose reviews Kant himself takes note¹⁷—who claims to find a “deduction of Spinozism”

Edwards (2000). The greater analogy Kant now allows between possible experience and the *omnitudo realitatis* is surely connected to his heightened sense of intimacy with Spinozism.

16. In DHuG, Jacobi reports that it was with palpitations that he first read Kant's pre-critical essay on God's existence, in which Kant's conception of God as *ens realissimum* is most fully expounded, and he cites several passages that cohere with his exposition of Spinoza. See Jacobi (1994), 282–285, for differences between the 1787 and 1815 editions.

17. For example, Kant (1900–), 5: 8–9, at the beginning of KpV, and 6: 4n., at the beginning of his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

from Kant's philosophy, although he admits that Kant himself "has not yet boasted" about such a deduction. How might such a deduction proceed?

Pistorius's greatest difficulty with the critical philosophy is that in contrast, he says, with Leibniz, Kant takes not only representations of outer sense but also representations of inner sense to yield knowledge only of appearances. Thus, the empirical self is no more transcendently real than empirical objects. But then, Pistorius puzzles, to whom do all these appearances appear? Must there not be a self in itself if Kant's talk of appearances is to make sense? But how can we know ourselves to be selves in themselves if transcendental idealism is true, and everything in space and/or time is mere appearance? For the thinking self is surely in time.

The difficulty is first raised in Pistorius's 1784 review of Kant's *Prolegomena*, but it is developed more fully in his 1786 review of Schulz's *Erläuterungen*. Between the two reviews, the pantheism controversy has erupted. And now, unquestionably under the influence of Jacobi, Pistorius thinks that he *perhaps* sees what Kant might have in mind. Perhaps Kant is in fact a Spinozist, although Pistorius hesitates to say something that sounds so "malicious."

Here is the relevant extract from Pistorius's 1786 review:¹⁸

According to this [Kantian] system, reason demands the completion of the series of natural events and causes, it seeks a limit outside the same, ascends from conditioned to unconditioned, and must assume a limit, an unknown something as the unconditioned, because otherwise it can never find the sought after completion and satisfaction.—If I am not mistaken, then reason, educated and guided by this theory of appearance and truth [i.e., transcended idealism] can and must find this completion nowhere else but in the series itself. Presupposing that an intelligible world lies at the ground of and corresponds to the sensible world, and that something real lies at the ground of and corresponds to appearances, presupposing that all representations that are successive or that relate to time-determinations are merely apparent and subjective, for which reason nothing similar or corresponding [to them] finds a place in reality or in the objective, intelligible world, then this world is surely the self-subsistent thing [*das für sich bestehende Ding*], is sufficient unto itself, and limits itself; consequently, it has a beginning just as little as it has an end;

18. I translate this lengthy extract for two reasons. First, I do not see that a paraphrase would be of much help to the reader. Second, this section was unfortunately omitted from the English translation of the review.

consequently, everything manifold, which is represented as simultaneously existent in space and as successive in time, this manifold and mutable, [for which] reason needed to seek a limit and an unconditioned, is mere illusion. It is the same as the illusion of which a man is capable without knowing it, [when he] imagines that the stream down which he travels constitutes a curved line returning to itself, that he always descends and never again ascends, that his stream has a beginning, and a source, and an end, or an outlet, for indeed all this is only appearance. Certainly, so long as we take time for something objective, for a representation that is at least partly grounded in *things in themselves*, as philosophers and laymen have hitherto done, we must presuppose a beginning and an end of natural series, and our reason must seek the completion of these series outside them, and demand something unconditioned for every conditioned; if, however, taught better, we know all succession in time and everything manifold in space to be merely subjective and apparent, then we must also direct reason not to import this successive and manifold into the objective, intelligible world. We would have to say to [reason]: this situation, that we never come to an end in the quest for natural causes, but rather proceed from conditioned to conditioned *ad infinitum*, arises from the fact that in the actual objective world there is room for neither succession nor manifoldness, as little as beginning and end, or any limitation whatsoever, neither infinite divisibility nor indivisible parts. All this finds its place only in the sensible world, not in the intelligible world, is only appearance and illusion, as much as the [figment of the] imagination that we take ourselves for actual substances. Rather, there is, provided overall that something exists, only one sole substance, and this is the sole *thing in itself*, the sole noumenon, namely the intelligible or objective world. This limits itself, this is the sphere which has neither beginning nor end. This is the sole ideal of pure reason. Thus, according to this [Kantian] theory of the apparent and the real, the ideas of reason are and must be specified in exactly the same way as Spinoza specified them. For him, as is known, the world is the sole substance, the self-completing series, or the unlimited sphere, which for him plays the role of the God-head. The author's [i.e., Kant's] theory would secure [Spinoza's] pantheism against the important objection that an infinite thinking substance cannot be put together out of an infinite number of finite thinking substances, for if, according to [that theory] our substantiality is merely logical and apparent, if our *I* is nothing but self-consciousness, and this only a subjective pre-requisite of the synthesis of representations, a modification of other modifications; what then prevents it from being the case that all these representations are modifications of the sole substance? Thus

reason finds all its demands satisfied in Spinoza's system, if time-determinations and all representations related to them are merely apparent and subjective, and reason would be unjust, after such a satisfaction, if it still wanted to seek a particular Godhead, at any rate the interest of truth demands no Godhead other than the intelligible world.

Once again, one will say, these are inferences, and indeed inferences which present Mr. Kant's theory in a malicious light. In itself, however, it contributes nothing towards a refutation of [that theory] if from it may be brought a deduction of Spinozism of which, as far as is known, he has not yet boasted. It is true, they are mere inferences; and I am sorry that they seem malicious, and to that extent they should also not prove anything against the Kantian theory.¹⁹

I am not sure that it is possible to reconstruct a cogent argument on the basis of what Pistorius says. At least this much is clear: Spinozism can help Kantianism, and Kantianism can help Spinozism. Spinozism can help Kantianism, because it answers the question, "If our empirical selves are appearances, to whom do appearances appear?" The Spinozistic answer is that they appear to God, who is the sole substance, hence the sole transcendently real being. At the same time, Kantianism can help Spinozism because it answers the question, "How can an infinite thinking substance be put together out of an infinite number of finite thinking substances?" The answer is that no such operation is necessary, for empirical selves are appearances, not finite thinking substances.

This does not amount to the promised *deduction* of Spinozism. For it shows at most that Spinozism and Kantianism are *compatible*, since they agree on the negative thesis that empirical things—including selves—are not substances, and that combining Spinozism and Kantianism into a single philosophical position might be a good idea for anyone who holds either view.

Pistorius seems to want to make the stronger claim that Kant *must* be a Spinozist. But he is no more than suggestive about why. Like Jacobi, Pistorius seems to associate Kant's view about the *omnitude realitatis* with Spinozism. He says of the "sole substance . . . , namely the intelligible or objective world" that it "is the sole ideal of pure reason," echoing Kant's language in the Transcendental Ideal. Now, it is true that Kant talks *at first* of the *omnitude realitatis* as if it were identical with the *ens realissimum*,

19. Pistorius (1786), 96–98, reprinted in Landau (ed.) (1991), 329–330.

which might suggest a Spinozist construal. But Kant explicitly revises his formulation, indicating that the *omnitude realitatis* is grounded in God, so that God is not to be identified with the sum-total of all reality.²⁰

So is it merely because of a confusion arising from Kant's unclarity that Pistorius thinks him a Spinozist? An argument—but not a very good one—is suggested by the following passage:

Certainly, so long as we take time for something objective, for a representation that is at least partly grounded in *things in themselves*, as philosophers and laymen have hitherto done, we must presuppose a beginning and an end of natural series, and our reason must seek the completion of these series outside them, and demand something unconditioned for every conditioned; if, however, taught better, we know all succession in time and everything manifold in space to be merely subjective and apparent, then we must also direct reason not to import this successive and manifold into the objective, intelligible world. We would have to say to [reason]: this situation, that we never come to an end in the quest for natural causes, but rather proceed from conditioned to conditioned *ad infinitum*, arises from the fact that in the actual objective world there is room for neither succession nor manifoldness, as little as beginning and end, or any limitation whatsoever, neither infinite divisibility nor indivisible parts. All this finds its place only in the sensible world, not in the intelligible world, is only appearance and illusion, as much as the [figment of the] imagination that we take ourselves for actual substances.²¹

Here Pistorius seems to be drawing a connection between commitment to the transcendently real basis of time and commitment to the manifoldness of transcendently real things. On the one hand, the transcendental realist holds that temporal succession is "at least partly grounded in *things in themselves*." Thus, the Leibnizian, for example, thinks that temporal property-ascriptions supervene on intrinsic property-ascriptions, even if the former are not directly equivalent to the latter. Someone who takes such a view may—perhaps, must—hold that there is some nontemporal manifoldness upon which temporal manifoldness supervenes. So there is no obvious reason why a transcendental realist cannot accommodate the existence of more than one transcendently real thing—say, a plurality of finite selves, plus God. On the other hand, the transcendental idealist holds

20. Kant (1900–), KrV, A579/B607.

21. Pistorius (1786), 96–98, reprinted in Landau (ed.) (1991), 329–330.

that temporal succession does not supervene on anything that is transcendently real. So there is no nontemporal manifoldness on which temporal manifoldness is grounded. And then there is no way to accommodate the existence of more than one transcendently real thing. For, if there is no transcendently real manifoldness, then there can be no plurality of transcendently real things.

Although it is somewhat suggestive, this argument does not work. It does not follow from the thesis that there is no nontemporal transcendently real manifoldness on which temporal manifoldness supervenes, that there can be no plurality of transcendently real things. There may be nontemporal, transcendently real manifoldness on which temporal manifoldness does *not* supervene. In any event, if one wants to accommodate a plurality of transcendently real substances, one needs to have room for manifoldness—or, to use a more appropriate word, complexity—within *concepts*. In other words, one needs to have room for a distinction between different concepts of things, such that one concept has a certain set of constituents and the other concept has another set. But conceptual complexity is quite different from the manifoldness involved in temporal succession, and Pistorius has given no reason why Kant's thoroughgoing elimination of the latter from the intelligible world should make it impossible for him to hold onto the former.

Nevertheless, despite the failure of the argument that perhaps underlies Pistorius's line of thought, there is a clue to a more promising argument in something he says: "If I am not mistaken, then reason, educated and guided by this theory of appearance and truth [i.e., transcendental idealism] can and must find this completion nowhere else but in the series itself." For this suggests that there may be a Spinozistic solution to Kant's Third Antinomy. Indeed, as I am about to argue, it is possible to reach this conclusion by reading Kant's Third Antinomy through the lens of Jacobi's Spinoza interpretation. Now this is of no small significance. Not only does Kant himself regard the antinomies as among his principal arguments for transcendental idealism, and not only does the Third Antinomy in particular pave the way for the important transition to Kant's practical philosophy, but—more importantly for my purposes—the Third Antinomy represents a direct response by Kant to the Agrippan, Leibnizian, and Humean/Newtonian problems. So, if there is a Spinozistic solution to the Third Antinomy, then there is a Spinozistic solution that rivals Kant's transcendental idealism as a response to some of the problems that motivate it.

To bring out the relationship between the argument for Spinozistic Monism ascribed to Spinoza by Jacobi and the argument for the antithesis in Kant's Third Antinomy, I will now discuss them, in parallel—at least, that is, until they diverge.²² In a letter to Mendelssohn, Jacobi attributes to Spinoza an argument for Holistic Monism in six steps.²³ The first step expresses commitment to the project of escaping the Agrippan trilemma by finding a fourth alternative.

I. At the ground of every becoming there must lie a being that has not itself become; at the ground of every coming-to-be, something that has not come-to-be; at the ground of everything alterable, an unalterable and eternal thing.²⁴

This corresponds to a version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that Kant ascribes to the faculty of reason:

If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given, through which alone the conditioned was possible.²⁵

This principle plays the main role in Kant's argument for the Third Antinomy's thesis that there must be causality of freedom, or absolute causation.

Jacobi's second and third steps give an argument parallel to Kant's argument for the antithesis:

II. *Becoming* can as little have come-to-be or begun as *Being*; or, if that which subsists in itself (the eternally unalterable, that which persists in the impermanent) had ever been by itself, without the impermanent, it would never have produced a becoming, either within itself or outside, for these would both presuppose a coming-to-be from nothingness.

III. From all eternity, therefore, the impermanent has been with the per-

22. We know that Jacobi read the *Critique* before writing his Spinoza book, so it is possible that he has been influenced by the Third Antinomy. But I know of no proof for this, and my argument does not require it. My concern is not with the historical relationship between Kant and Jacobi, but rather with the question: what is it like to read Kant only after one has read Jacobi?

23. The argument is from Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1789), I: 93–95. I am not concerned here with the evaluation of Jacobi as an interpreter. Certainly, the relationship between what Jacobi says and the texts he cites from Spinoza is often hard to discern. Nevertheless, I will sometimes draw an inference about Jacobi's intentions from the texts he cites.

24. Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), I: 93.

25. Kant (1900–), KrV, A409/B436.

manent, the temporal with the eternal, the finite with the infinite, and whosoever assumes a beginning of the finite, also assumes a coming-to-be from nothingness.²⁶

The parallel Kantian argument is as follows:

Suppose there were a *freedom* in the transcendental sense, as a special kind of causality in accordance with which the occurrences of the world could follow, namely a faculty of absolutely beginning a state, and hence also a series of its consequences; then not only will a series begin absolutely through this spontaneity, but the determination of this spontaneity itself to produce the series, i.e., its causality, will begin absolutely, so that nothing precedes it through which this occurring action is determined in accordance with constant laws. Every beginning of action, however, presupposes a state of the not yet acting cause, and a dynamically first beginning of action presupposes a state that has no causal connection at all with the cause of the previous one, i.e., in no way follows from it. Thus transcendental freedom is contrary to the causal law . . . and hence is an empty thought-entity.²⁷

What Jacobi calls the beginning of becoming corresponds to what Kant calls an absolute beginning. And the argument for rejecting the former parallels the argument for rejecting the latter. Suppose there was an absolute beginning, at which point the absolutely unconditioned started to generate series of conditioned conditions. Then there must have been a time prior to the absolute beginning, when the absolutely unconditioned was not engaged in such generation. But now there are only two possibilities. Either there is a sufficient reason why the absolutely unconditioned passes from inactivity to generation at the relevant time, a reason that was lacking before that time. Or there is no sufficient reason for the change. In either case, the result is inconsistent with the commitment to escaping the Agrippan trilemma expressed by Kant's principle of the unconditioned and by Jacobi's step one. The second case is obvious. In the first case, the sufficient reason cannot arise from the absolutely unconditioned itself, or else it could not have been lacking earlier. Therefore the sufficient reason must arise from elsewhere. But then what we have been calling the abso-

26. Jacobi (1998), *ÜLS* (1785), 1: 93–94.

27. Kant (1900–), *KrV*, A445–447/B473–475.

lutely unconditioned is in fact conditioned, and we have not succeeded in finding a fourth alternative to the Agrippan trilemma.²⁸

It is at this point that Jacobi's argument diverges from Kant's.

IV. If the finite was with the eternal from all eternity, it cannot be outside it, for if it were outside it, it would either be another being that subsists on its own, or be produced by the subsisting thing from nothing.

V. If it were produced by the subsisting thing from nothing, so too would the force or determination, in virtue of which it was produced by the infinite thing from nothingness, *have come* from nothingness; for in the infinite, eternal, permanent thing, everything is infinitely, permanently, and eternally actual. An action first initiated by the infinite being could not have begun otherwise than from all eternity, and its determination could not have derived from anywhere except from nothingness.²⁹

As I understand it, this argument has the same basic structure as the previous one, but it is concerned, not with *temporality*, but with *modality*.

The previous argument, we might say, showed that the absolutely unconditioned cannot *temporally transcend* a generated series of conditioned conditions. That is, the former could not have preexisted the latter. The current argument claims that the absolutely unconditioned cannot *modally transcend* a generated series of conditioned conditions. That is, it cannot even be *possible* for the former to exist when the latter does not. For, if it is possible, then there must be some sufficient reason why the latter *actually* exists. Again, there are only two cases. Either there is no sufficient reason, or there is a sufficient reason that cannot arise from the absolutely unconditioned itself. In either case, we have not escaped from the Agrippan trilemma.

Let us look more closely at Jacobi's text. Step IV distinguishes two ways in which the finite could be "outside" the eternal or the infinite. The first

28. Jacobi prefers to formulate the Principle of Sufficient Reason as the principle that nothing comes from nothing. See Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), 1: 187; Spinoza (1925), 1: 21, Spinoza (2002), 42. Doubtless, he prefers this formulation in part because it brings out sharply the incompatibility he believes to exist between philosophical reasoning and faith. He may also prefer it because of the delicious irony that, in his view, this principle leads inexorably to nihilism. In this particular instance, Jacobi's preference accords with Kant's words. For Kant says of an absolute beginning of spontaneity to produce a series that "nothing precedes it through which this occurring action is determined in accordance with constant laws."

29. Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), 1:94.

way is mentioned only to be set aside. For it is obvious that the finite cannot be a "being that subsists on its own". Although the finitude of the finite has not been explicated, it must involve some way of lacking self-sufficiency and needing a ground. The second way is for the finite to be produced *eternally* from nothing by the infinite. Since the production is eternal and does not have an absolute beginning in time, the problem discussed in step II—the *problem of temporal transcendence*—is avoided. But a similar problem—the *problem of modal transcendence*—remains. For if talk of eternal production is to mean anything, it must mean at least that it is possible for the producer to exist without the produced. And now there is no way to avoid the argument I gave a paragraph ago.³⁰

Consequently, Jacobi concludes on Spinoza's behalf, the finite cannot be outside the infinite. Now, it may well seem, at this point, that there simply cannot be any escape from the Agrippan trilemma through the fourth alternative of an absolutely unconditioned. If, to use Jacobi's terminology, the finite is eternally in the infinite, then is the infinite not conditioned by the finite just as much as the finite is conditioned by the infinite? After the failure of both temporal and modal transcendence, how *can* the infinite be absolutely unconditioned?

Although Kant considers only the failure of temporal transcendence, his remarks on the possibility of escaping from the Agrippan trilemma are also pertinent to Jacobi's situation. The root of the difficulty may be put as follows. One thinks of the absolutely unconditioned as the first member of the series of conditions it grounds. But then, although one has sought to safeguard the distinctiveness of the absolutely unconditioned, say by assuming its temporal (or modal) transcendence, nevertheless the absolutely unconditioned inevitably becomes *homogeneous* with the other members of the series. And then it becomes subject to the law of the series—to the demand for an antecedent condition—and so it is no longer the absolutely unconditioned with which one hoped to satisfy reason's demand once and for all. Consequently, if this difficulty is to be overcome, it can only be by ensuring the *heterogeneity* of the absolutely unconditioned to every member of the series of conditions.

30. Again, Jacobi's language echoes Kant's, perhaps by coincidence. For Kant says that it is not only the series that must begin absolutely, but also the "determination" to produce it, while Jacobi says that it is not only the finite that must be produced from nothing, but also "the force or determination, in virtue of which it was produced by the infinite thing."

I will call this the Heterogeneity Requirement. Now, Kant does not, at this point, consider the possibility that there might be more than one way to meet the requirement, hence more than one way to escape from the Agrippan trilemma. Instead he goes on to develop *one* solution which, he claims, does the job. Namely, heterogeneity is at least logically possible if the series of conditions is not mathematical but *dynamic*—that is to say, if the pure category under which the conditions are connected and which one hopes to extend to the unconditioned is, for example, the category of causality. Furthermore, the transcendental idealism that Kant has already motivated on other grounds can flesh out the notion of heterogeneity, since he has already had to assume two worlds under distinct legislations, each realizing the pure categories of the understanding. So there is no contradiction in the idea of an uncaused cause in the intelligible world that is responsible for a series of conditions in the empirical world.

It would seem, however, that, even if Kant's solution responds to the problem of temporal transcendence, it fails to respond to the problem of modal transcendence. For it would seem that Kant has in mind a free activity such that it is possible for the cause to exist while the effect does not. At worst, then, Kant's solution fails to meet the Heterogeneity Requirement. At best, supposing that there is either an objection to the modal transcendence problem or a Kantian response to that problem, it still seems that Kant's solution represents only one possible way of meeting the Heterogeneity Requirement and that Jacobi's Spinozistic solution promises to be another:

VI. Hence the finite is in the infinite, so that the sum of all finite things, equally containing within itself the whole of eternity at every moment, past and future, is one and the same as the infinite being itself.³¹

In effect, while Kant proposes that the absolutely unconditioned be *transcendent to the series as a whole*, indeed to the empirical world within which the series unfolds, Jacobi proposes, on Spinoza's behalf, that the absolutely unconditioned be *immanent within the series as a whole*, indeed immanent to the empirical world within which the series unfolds. Both proposals seek to avoid the problematic situation in which the absolutely unconditioned is supposed to be transcendent to the first member of the series, which has the effect of pulling the absolute into the series and compromising its un-

31. Jacobi (1998), ÜLS (1785), 1: 95.

conditionedness. Both proposals seek to render the absolutely unconditioned heterogeneous with respect to every member of the series.

We have now succeeded in deriving Pistorius's suggestive formulation: "reason . . . can and must find this completion nowhere else but in the series itself." But what exactly does it mean for the absolutely unconditioned to be immanent within the series as a whole, or to be "one and the same" as "the sum of all finite things"? In his next paragraph—which I have had reason to cite above—Jacobi offers some clarification:

VII. This sum is not an absurd combination of finite things, together constituting an infinite, but a whole in the strictest sense, whose parts can only be thought within it and according to it.³²

The proposal is not, then, that the infinite is identical with the extension of the class of all finite things.³³ Rather, I suggest, the proposal is that the sum of all finite things constitutes what Kant calls the *omnitude realitatis*, a whole that completely determines its parts in virtue of its absolute first principle: the *ens realissimum*. It is just here that, as we saw earlier, Jacobi cites Kant's views on part/whole relations to shed light on Holistic Monism.

According to my suggestion, the claim that the infinite is "one and the same" as "the sum of all finite things" needs to be handled with care. What it means is not that there is no distinction to be drawn between the *ens realissimum* and the *omnitude realitatis*. It means, rather, that the distinction is modal, not real, and that the former is the ground of the latter. So no finite thing is really distinct from its infinite ground. And, although the infinite ground cannot be without the finite, nevertheless the infinite conditions—that is, grounds—the finite, while the finite does not condition the infinite, which is therefore absolutely unconditioned.

Another formulation of Pistorius may now be derived: "there is, provided overall that something exists, only one sole substance, and this is the sole *thing in itself*, the sole noumenon, namely the intelligible or objective world." This does not mean that the sole substance is the intelligible world as a *manifold*. It means rather that the sole substance is the intelligible world as a *unity*. One might say that the absolutely unconditioned constitutes *the worldhood of the intelligible world*: the principle that renders it a whole prior

32. Jacobi (1998), ŪLS (1789), 1: 95–96.

33. Recall Pistorius, who was earlier cited as suggesting that Kantianism could help Spinozism against the objection that no aggregation of finite intellects can result in an infinite intellect.

to its parts, which are completely determined through their delimitation of the whole.

I hope to have made clear how a reader approaching the *Critique* via Jacobi's Spinoza interpretation could detect an affinity between Kant's philosophy and Holistic Monism, in virtue of a connection between Jacobi's argument for Holistic Monism and Kant's Third Antinomy. However, it may be objected that, in spite of their structural similarities, the two arguments are concerned with entirely different matters. After all, the Spinozistic argument is concerned with the question of the absolute ground of the world, of which there can be only one, whereas Kant's argument is concerned with the question of the absolute ground of a series of events in a free will, of which there can be many.

The objection is partly right but also partly wrong. To be sure, Kant has his sights set on a demonstration of the logical possibility of a free will, and he believes that there can be many such wills. However, as Kant himself acknowledges, the argument is in the first instance concerned with the absolute ground of the world:

We have really established [in the argument for the Thesis] this necessity of a first beginning of a series of appearances from freedom only to the extent that this is required to make comprehensible an origin of the world, since one can take all the subsequent states to be a result of mere natural laws. But because the faculty of beginning a series in time entirely on its own is thereby proved (though no insight into it is achieved), now we are permitted also to allow that in the course of the world different series may begin on their own as far as their causality is concerned, and to ascribe to the substances in those series the faculty of acting from freedom.³⁴

One may well wonder how the same line of reasoning that applies to the unique ground of the world can be applied to different series within the world without fracturing the unity of the world. Of course, Kant makes this move because he believes that it is required if he is to make sense of freedom of the will. But this can only make Kant's move more puzzling to readers influenced by Spinozism. For how can Kant introduce, without any argument, a conception of freedom whose legitimacy is so deeply controversial? According to Spinoza, among others, the idea of freedom of the

34. Kant (1900-), KrV, A449-450/B476-477.

will expresses an illusion. Clearly, Kant disagrees, taking it to be a genuine idea of an absolutely unconditioned condition. But on what basis? Pistorius raises this question, as does Fichte when he first reads the *Critique of Pure Reason*.³⁵

Before turning to Kant's critical engagement with Spinozism in the second *Critique*, I want to address a question arising from what has been said so far: if Jacobi's Spinozistic remark that the infinite is "one and the same" as "the sum of all finite things" is to be understood as saying that the distinction between the *ens realissimum* and the *omnitudo realitatis* is modal, not real, then why is Kant *not* a Holistic Monist? For, after all, Kant surely agrees that the distinction is modal, not real, both in his pre-critical philosophy and in at least some of his critical remarks about reason's demands upon our thinking.

The answer is that Kant is not a Holistic Monist because of two views which he holds and which Spinoza rejects. First, Kant regards the *ens realissimum* as possessing every absolutely infinite intrinsic property, whereas Spinoza ascribes to his first principle infinite attributes, which are not intrinsic properties, whatever exactly they are. Second, Kant regards finite things in themselves as possessing finite versions of God's intrinsic properties, and he is committed to an analogical relationship between the predicates ascribed to finite things and the predicates ascribed to God, whereas Spinoza rejects any such relationship.³⁶ Given these views, Kant can reconcile the dependence of all things on God with real distinctions, not only between finite things but also between each finite thing and God. On the one hand, finite things in themselves are dependent on God, not only for their actualization, but also for their transcendently real possibility, which cannot be rendered intelligible without reference to God as the *ens realis-*

35. In a posthumously published text from 1790, "Aphorisms concerning Religion und Deism," Fichte comments that even Kant, "the sharpest-witted defender of freedom who ever was," merely takes the concept of freedom as "given from somewhere else (from sensation, no doubt)" and does nothing in the Third Antinomy "but to justify and clarify it," since "he would never have come upon any such concept in rigorous arguments from the first principles of human knowledge." See Fichte (1964–), II/1: 290. At this point, Fichte clearly thinks, in Spinozist fashion, that the concept of freedom is based on a feeling and is not grounded in reason. Only later that year, when Fichte reads the second *Critique*, with its Deduction of Freedom, does he acknowledge the legitimacy of Kant's conception of freedom of the will and experience a conversion to Kant's Copernican revolution.

36. See Kant (1900–), BJPM, 8: 154; Spinoza, E1P17S, in Spinoza (1925), 2: 62–63, translated in Spinoza (2002), 228–229.

simum who grounds reality. On the other hand, however, finite things are substances apart from God and from each other. For, just because their properties are derivative versions of God's properties, which are intrinsic to Him, finite things are what they are in virtue of properties intrinsic to them.³⁷

Holistic Monism, then, requires not only that the distinction between the *omnitudo realitatis* and the *ens realissimum* be modal rather than real, but also that the *omnitudo realitatis* be conceived in the way that Kant conceives empirical space and time: as a relational framework within which things are individuated. The positive and negative theses must *both* be maintained, and they must be maintained *with respect to the same domain*. Kant holds a version of the positive thesis about the intelligible world and a version of the negative thesis about the empirical world. Since he also holds that things in themselves and appearances are individuated in two quite different ways, he does not maintain both theses about the same domain. Consequently, he is not a Holistic Monist.

This way of putting the requirements of Holistic Monism raises another question. In the previous chapter, I argued that Derivation Monism can be compatible with Kantian dualism. If, however, Holistic Monism is incompatible with the distinction between the way in which things in themselves are individuated and the way in which appearances are individuated, is it not incompatible with Kantian dualism?

The answer, I think, is: no. Of course, Holistic Monism is plainly incompatible with Kant's fully articulated version of Kantian dualism, since that involves Monadic Individualism. But Holistic Monism is nevertheless compatible with the fundamental idea of two structures of grounding, such that one is subject to the Agrippan trilemma which the other escapes, and such that the former is dependent on the latter for its fundamental concepts. The former structure could be identified with a structure of grounding internal to a specific attribute of the absolute. Thus, for example, a passage from Spinoza cited by Jacobi in connection with his argument for Holistic Monism explicitly asserts that, within the attribute of extension, there are infinite regresses of physical grounds.³⁸ Meanwhile, the latter structure

37. But see Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 131n, where holiness, blessedness, and wisdom are said to pertain to God alone.

38. E1P28, Spinoza (2002), 233: "Every individual thing, i.e., anything whatever which is finite and has a determinate existence; cannot exist or be determined to act unless it be determined to exist and to act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and this

could be identified with the peculiarly philosophical demonstration that each attribute is indeed an expression of a single absolute first principle—hence that things grounded with respect to any attribute are in fact derivatives of that principle. Thus one may regard Holistic Monism as part of a response to the very problems that motivate Kantian dualism. The resulting view is a two-aspect view: there is one world, the empirical world, but this single set of things may be viewed *either* from the empirical standpoint, as situated within a structure of grounding subject to the Agrippan trilemma, *or* from the philosophical standpoint, as situated within a structure of grounding that terminates in an absolute first principle.

2.4

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Kant is committed to Monadic Individualism on two distinct levels. First, at the synthetic *a priori* level of his *theoretical* commitment to the in itself, corresponding to Leibnizian hypothetical necessity, he thinks that the inhabitants of the intelligible world must be not only independent of the human mind and hence of space, time, and matter, but also substances with some intrinsic properties. Thus, if one had to be a transcendental realist, one would have to be not a Leibnizian monadologist but at any rate a Monadic Individualist. Of course, One does *not* have to be a transcendental realist, but even a transcendental idealist should recognize the need for Monadic Individualism about things in themselves and may employ it in auxiliary arguments for his idealism. Second, Monadic Individualism plays a central role in *practical* philosophy, for it provides just the right structure for the conception of agency required by morality. Two questions about the German idealists correspond to these two levels of commitment. First, why might one think that, if one had to be a transcendental realist, one should be a Holistic Monist rather than a Monadic Individualist? Or, why might one think that one should be a Holistic Monist at the level of hypothetical necessity about the in itself? Second, why might one think that Holistic Monism is to be preferred over Monadic Individualism within practical philosophy? In this section, I address the first of these questions.

cause again cannot exist or be determined to act unless it be determined to exist and to act by another cause which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so ad infinitum." Some interpreters treat infinitely regressive causality as an illusion. See, for example, Joachim (1901), 98–122. For a realistic interpretation, see Curley (1969), ch. 2.

In the new context established by Jacobi, the question is raised in the form: Leibniz or Spinoza? But it is important to see that, setting aside the tangled exegetical questions about whether each figure is interpreted correctly or at least fairly, it is the contest between Monadic Individualism and Holistic Monism that is truly at stake.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, especially in the Amphiboly, Kant presents Leibnizianism as the position that one would be most rational to adopt if one had to be a transcendental realist. At the same time, he argues that Leibniz's central doctrines follow rigorously from a fundamental error: the assumption that reflection by means of the pure categories is sufficient for the determination of objects of possible cognition. Kant does not consider the possibility that Spinozism, rather than Leibnizianism, would be the rigorously drawn consequence of this error, and he offers no arguments against this possibility. In Kant's lectures on metaphysics—prior to the 1790s—Spinoza is mentioned only to be dismissed in a standard, Wolffian manner.³⁹ Spinoza's monism is presented as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Descartes' poor definition of substance. For Descartes defines "substance" in terms of independence of existence, which inevitably leaves the status of finite—that is, dependent—substances unclear, and suggests that God is the sole substance.⁴⁰ However, substance is properly defined in terms of explanatory sufficiency.⁴¹ Descartes mistakenly conceived a substance as an *ens a se*, an independent existent, and Spinoza was correct to infer from this faulty conception that there could be only one substance. In contrast, Leibniz and the Wolffians conceived a substance as an *ens per se*, a thing that is what it is in virtue of its intrinsic properties, of which there can be many. Thus Spinoza is mentioned merely as the protagonist in a cautionary tale about the importance of giving proper definitions.⁴²

39. See Kant (1900–) 28: 563, from the 1780s.

40. See Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* I, #51, in Descartes (1964–1976), 9B: 24, translated in Descartes (1985), 1: 210: "By *substance* we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence. And there is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence. Hence the term 'substance' does not apply *univocally*, as they say in the Schools, to God and to other things; that is, there is no distinctly intelligible meaning of the term which is common to God and his creatures."

41. Langton (1998) erroneously ascribes to Kant a Cartesian conception of substance. See, for example, 19: "A substance is a thing which can exist absolutely, independently of its relations to other things."

42. Hamann, who acted as Jacobi's go-between with Kant, reported to Jacobi on 30 November

To a reader formed by the Spinozism controversy, this must seem a blindspot in Kant's visual field. For, in the first *Critique*, Kant never considers a thesis that, in the wake of the controversy, cannot be avoided in a discussion of Leibniz: the thesis that Leibniz and Spinoza are philosophically closer than Leibniz and his followers have wanted to admit. In its maximal form, this thesis would all but eliminate the differences between Leibniz and Spinoza, either by rendering Spinoza a Leibnizian or by rendering Leibniz a Spinozist. In its minimal form, the thesis diminishes the differences between them to a point where the choice between them becomes an academic one depending on abstruse questions of metaphysics.

The initial suggestion, developed at length in Mendelssohn's 1785 *Morning Hours*, is the minimal thesis that there is a "purified Spinozism" that is compatible with at least some central aspects of orthodox religion and that corresponds to one aspect of Leibniz's system. The "purified Spinozist" conception of the world—as a totality whose principle of unity is God and whose members subsist in God as His derivatives—is said to correspond to the Leibnizian conception of the *mind* of God *prior to the creation of the world*. On the Leibnizian view, however, subsistence in the mind of God is sufficient only for the *idea* of a *possible* thing, not for the *actual instantiation* of that idea or for the *actual existence* of a thing.⁴³ Early in his career, Mendelssohn had used this way of framing the issues to render plausible the claim that Leibniz had developed the doctrine of pre-established harmony under Spinoza's influence.⁴⁴ In exchanges that were private at the time, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing had taken Spinoza's side, arguing that, once the notion of subsistence in God was available, the notion of subsistence outside God was at worst incoherent and at best redundant.⁴⁵

Once Jacobi has publicly exposed Lessing's sympathy for Spinozism as a scandal, Mendelssohn adopts the following strategy in his morning hours. First, Mendelssohn argues that Lessing is sympathetic only to a "purified Spinozism" that is compatible with at least some aspects of orthodox religion. Consequently, there is no scandal here, and the issue between Lessing's Spinozism and Leibnizianism is an academic one that does not affect

1785, that, by his own admission, Kant had never studied Spinoza and was too occupied with his own system to do so. See Hamann (1955–1975), 6: 161, cited by Zammito (1992), 233.

43. Mendelssohn (1974), III/2: 114–137.

44. Mendelssohn (1974), I: 17, 344.

45. Lessing (1979), 8: 515–516.

fundamental commitments to religion and morality. Second, Mendelssohn argues that "purified Spinozism" is refutable by an objection that does not touch Leibnizianism. As Mendelssohn notes, although Wolff had given the refutation in question some time ago, no one had even attempted to respond on Spinoza's behalf.⁴⁶

In 1793, a response to Mendelssohn and Wolff is finally given on Spinoza's behalf by Salomon Maimon, who also proposes the maximal thesis that Leibniz is himself a Spinozist.⁴⁷ One year later, in Fichte's *Foundations* (1794), Maimon is said to have shown "that, when fully thought out, the system of Leibniz is nothing other than Spinozism."⁴⁸ This statement justifies Fichte's contention that Spinozism is the optimal version of transcendental realism, hence transcendental idealism's principal rival.

One looks in vain to either Mendelssohn or Maimon for a genuine confrontation between Monadic Individualism and Holistic Monism. That Mendelssohn is not sensitive to Leibniz's Monadic Individualism is one of Kant's points in his remarks on Jakob's *Examination*: Mendelssohn wants to help himself to talk about things in themselves, but he does not realize that such talk involves commitment to intrinsic properties that are incompatible with Newtonian physics. Meanwhile, Mendelssohn seems to attribute to Spinoza the view that the absolute is the totality, not the principle of the totality's unity. This is a misunderstanding of Holistic Monism against which we have seen Jacobi protesting. It is also the misunderstanding that prepares the way for the Wolffian objection thought by Mendelssohn to be decisive: Spinoza has confused the extensive infinity of the totality of things with the intensive infinity of God. To this objection Maimon responds that only an intensively infinite understanding could know an infinite number of things—that is, grasp the systematic connections among them and thus know them as a totality. However, although Maimon understands Holistic Monism better than Mendelssohn, he interprets Leibniz as being committed to Holistic Monism, not Monadic Individualism. Maimon does not suggest that Leibniz's view is identical to Spinoza's. But he has made the difference between them minute enough for

46. Mendelssohn (1974), III/2: 110–113. Cf. Mendelssohn (1974), I: 16, 25–28. For Wolff's refutation, see Wolff (1964–), *Theologiae Naturalis Pars II*, §§671–716. In Mendelssohn (1974), 299, Altmann suggests that Mendelssohn is thinking of #706: "Infinite total reality—or in intentional form, infinite thought—is not made up of finite realities that are infinite in number."

47. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 59–63.

48. Fichte (1964–), WL, I/2: 264.

him to say that, "if a Leibnizian will not accept" his interpretation of Leibniz, "let it be called Spinoza's system."⁴⁹ Yet no arguments are given, or even gestured at, that count for Holistic Monism and against Monadic Individualism.

It is therefore in a spirit of hopefulness that one approaches a passage in the *Critique of Practical Reason* in which Kant argues, first, that if one were a maximally rigorous transcendental realist, one would be a Spinozist—that is, a Holistic Monist—and, second, that transcendental idealism may nevertheless retain, at the level of hypothetical necessity, a Monadic Individualism that is required for moral responsibility. However, these arguments do not seem to be promising; in fact, they seem patently problematic. It is perhaps for this reason that they have inspired remarkably little commentary.⁵⁰ In what follows, I will attempt to reconstruct Kant's arguments.

Kant takes his appeal to transcendental idealism in the Third Antinomy to establish no more than the logical nonimpossibility of freedom. There is no way, he thinks, to establish the real possibility of freedom, except by demonstrating its actuality, which he claims to do in the Analytic of the second *Critique*.⁵¹ After that Herculean labor has been performed, when Kant is discussing the need for the Analytic to take the systematic form he has given it in the Critical Elucidation of the Analytic, it comes as a surprise to learn that "a difficulty still awaits freedom insofar as it is to be united with the mechanism of nature in a being that belongs to the sensible world, a difficulty which, even after all the foregoing has been agreed to, still threatens freedom with complete destruction."⁵² The name of the difficulty is Spinozism.

In the discussion that follows, Kant's goal is twofold. He wants to show that transcendental idealism can overcome the threat of Spinozism, and he wants to show that transcendental realism cannot. On the assumption, which Kant never questions, that Spinozism is incompatible with freedom and is generally undesirable, the ultimate result is a further argument for transcendental idealism.

49. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 58.

50. See Beck (1960), 205–207, who confesses that he cannot see how Kant meets the issue he raises, and then suggests that, in any event, Kant was no longer very much interested in "a puzzle from theology and classical rationalism." Remarkably, Allison (1980), while providing a useful survey of Kant's changing attitude to Spinoza, does not discuss this passage at all.

51. See 262–301 below for a discussion of Kant's Deduction of Freedom.

52. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 100.

Kant considers the following argument for the thesis that transcendental idealism cannot avoid Spinozism:

If it is granted us that the intelligible subject can still be free with respect to a given action, although as a subject also belonging to the sensible world, he is mechanically conditioned with respect to the same action, it nevertheless seems that, as soon as one admits that *God as universal original being is the cause also of the existence of substance* (a proposition that can never be given up without also giving up the concept of God as the being of all beings and with it his all-sufficiency, on which everything in theology depends), one must admit that a human being's actions have their determining ground in *something altogether beyond his control*, namely in the causality of a supreme being which is distinct from him and upon which his own existence and the entire determination of his causality absolutely depend.⁵³

This argument is given at the level of what I have called Kant's synthetic commitment to the in itself (see Chapter 1), which corresponds to what Leibniz calls hypothetical necessity. Even after the Copernican revolution in philosophy—even after, for example, transcendental idealism has resolved the Third Antinomy, to which Kant alludes at the beginning of this passage—we may still ask (on the theoretically unprovable supposition that rationality is not only in us but outside us as well) what the intelligible world must be like. Thus we may ask whether it is to be conceived pluralistically, in accordance with Monadic Individualism, or whether it is to be conceived in accordance with Holistic Monism. As we have seen, by 1786 Kant gives a new importance within his critical philosophy to the conception of God as *ens realissimum*, which had been so important to his pre-critical system. It is to this conception that Kant alludes in his parenthetical remark.

The argument—call it argument A—may be reconstructed as follows:

- A1. God is all-sufficient.
- A2. God is the cause of the reality (i.e., essence) of substance(s).
- A3. God is the cause of the existence of substance(s).
- A4. God is the cause of the effects of substance(s).
- A5. Human actions are effects of substance(s).
- A6. God is the cause of human actions.

53. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 100–101.

A7. Human actions are not free and human beings are not responsible for them.

A1 expresses the philosophical function of the appeal to God: an escape from the Agrippan trilemma is possible only if all series of grounds terminate in an absolute ground, and God is that absolute ground. From A1 follows not only A2, on which Kant focuses in both the pre-critical writings and the *Transcendental Ideal*, but also A3. In other words, if God is all-sufficient then He is the cause not only of the essences or real possibilities of things, but also of the existence of actual things.

A4 follows from A3 on the assumption that causality is transitive: that if X causes Y and Y causes Z, then X causes Z. Then A5 and A6 follow easily. But, then, Kant worries, A7 seems unavoidable.

One response would be to accept the argument up to A6, while rejecting A7 on the grounds that proximate causes of a certain kind are free and responsible agents. But Kant thinks that the transcendental idealist should instead reject the assumption that causality is transitive and hence the inference from A3 to A4:

The difficulty mentioned above is resolved briefly and clearly as follows. If existence *in time* is only a sensible way of representing things which belongs to thinking beings in the world and consequently does not belong to them as things in themselves, then the creation of these beings is a creation of things in themselves, since the concept of a creation does not belong to the sensible way of representing existence or causality but can only be referred to noumena. Consequently, if I say of beings in the sensible world that they are created, I so far regard them as noumena. Just as it would thus be a contradiction to say that God is a creator of appearances, so it is also a contradiction to say that as creator he is the cause of actions in the sensible world and thus of actions as appearances, even though he is the cause of the existence of the acting beings (as noumena). If it is now possible to affirm freedom without compromising the natural mechanism of actions as appearances (by taking existence in time to be something that holds only of appearances, not of things in themselves), then it cannot make the slightest difference that acting beings are creatures, since creation has to do with their intelligible but not their sensible existence and therefore cannot be regarded as the determining ground of appearances.⁵⁴

54. Kant (1900-), KpV, 5: 102.

To understand Kant's point here, we need to recall that the Third Antinomy can be resolved only by a conception of causation that meets the Heterogeneity Requirement. Transcendental idealism meets the requirement, Kant claims, because it enables us to distinguish between two uses of the category of causality. On the one hand, the category of causality is put to empirical use within judgments about appearances, which are necessarily in space and/or time and which are governed by a principle that requires an antecedent cause for every event, hence a causal structure that is infinitely regressive and incompatible with free or unconditioned causation. On the other hand, the category of causality is put to transcendental use within thoughts about the in itself, thoughts that can never amount to theoretical cognition, whatever other functions they may have. Thus there is no logical contradiction in the idea of something in itself that is an uncaused cause which is heterogeneous to a series of conditions in the world of appearances. For the causal relationship between the uncaused cause and the series may be construed transcendently, while the causal relationship between the appearances in the series may be construed empirically.

These considerations from the first *Critique* are explicitly directed to both divine and human freedom of action. Now, however, Kant is adding that there is an important distinction between divine and human action. Human beings have two characters: intelligible and empirical. When we humans regard ourselves as moral agents, we see ourselves as simultaneously inhabiting two worlds. As uncaused causes, we inhabit the intelligible world of the in itself. As embodied sources of empirical alteration, we inhabit the phenomenal world of appearances. Thus human beings are causes in both the transcendental and empirical senses. However, God is a cause in only the transcendental sense. Thus, to say that God is creator is to say that God is the cause of the existence of the in itself, including human beings *qua* things in themselves. God causes the existence of human beings, whose understandings constitute the world of appearances within which human beings *qua* appearances are empirical causes of appearances. But from the premise that God transcendently causes the existence of human beings *qua* things in themselves (A3), as well as the premise that human beings *qua* appearances are empirical causes of appearances, it does not follow that God is the cause of appearances (A4). For it is inappropriate to apply the category of causality to God in the empirical sense. Indeed, it would be contradictory to do so because this would lead us to one version of the

Third Antinomy. It would be necessary that God be an uncaused cause, for otherwise He could not be all-sufficient, and it would be impossible that God be an uncaused cause, for, as an empirical cause, His own causation would be temporal and in need of an antecedent cause.

Consequently, the transcendental idealist is not forced to Spinozism by the premise that God is the creator of substance. Human beings alone are causes in both the transcendental and empirical senses. Hence human beings alone are responsible for their actions.

As Kant concedes, this solution involves great difficulty and may not even be susceptible to lucid presentation. Presumably, what he has in mind is the difficulty of grasping how human beings can be regarded both as things in themselves and as appearances, and of seeing how this can give rise to moral responsibility for actions. These are general difficulties of Kant's account of action, and, for my purposes here, it is more important to note the crucial but unclear role played by the notion of substance.

Kant uses the singular "substance" throughout his initial argument. This gives his formulations a certain *extensional* ambiguity, allowing them to be read on the assumption either of Spinoza's monism or of some other, non-monistic conception of substance. For Spinoza, God is the sole substance and is also the cause of Himself. Thus human beings are not substances, and, indeed, there can be no plurality of substance whatsoever. Accordingly, Kant uses the singular "substance" throughout. However, it is more natural to read the argument on the assumption that there can be a plurality of substances and that human beings are substances. Perhaps we are supposed to start the argument on the latter assumption that human beings are substances, whereas we are meant to end the argument by adopting the former assumption that God alone is substantial, which should lead us to reconstrue the preceding steps. In his response to the argument, however, Kant speaks of "the acting beings" in the plural. At this point, the ambiguity is resolved in favor of pluralism: God is the cause of the existence of substances, including human beings *qua* things in themselves. Thus God is not the sole substance.

Another consideration is that Kant's formulations are less than forthcoming about the *intension* of the term *substance*. Implicit in the argument is the notion that substances contain principles of action; this is a traditional notion emphasized by Leibniz against Descartes' conception of material substance as extension. Kant does not explain how noumenal substances can be both uncaused causes and effects of God's creation. In light of his

explicit commitment to Monadic Individualism, however, not only in his pre-critical system, but also in the critical philosophy at the level of the synthetic commitment to the in itself, there is good reason to suppose that he assumes human beings to be substantial agents in virtue of their intrinsic properties, which are caused by God with respect to both their reality and their actuality, but which nevertheless endow their subjects with the causal independence necessary for agency.

I now turn to Kant's claim that, unlike the transcendental idealist, the transcendental realist cannot avoid Spinozism and therefore cannot save freedom.

In fact, if a human being's actions insofar as they belong to his determinations in time were not merely determinations of him as appearance but as a thing in itself, freedom could not be saved. A human being would be a marionette or an automaton, like Vaucanson's,⁵⁵ built and wound up by the supreme artist; self-consciousness would indeed make him a thinking automaton, but the consciousness of his own spontaneity, if taken for freedom, would be mere delusion inasmuch as it deserves to be called freedom only comparatively, because the proximate determining causes of its motion and a long series of their determining causes are indeed internal but the last and highest is found entirely in an alien hand. Therefore I do not see how those who insist on regarding time and space as determinations belonging to the existence of things in themselves would avoid fatalism of actions. . . . Hence, if this ideality of time and space is not adopted, nothing remains but Spinozism, in which space and time are essential determinations of the original being itself, while the things dependent upon it (ourselves, therefore, included) are not substances but merely accidents inhering in it; for, if these things exist merely as its effects *in time*, which would be the condition of their existence itself, then the actions of these beings would have to be merely its actions that it performs in any place and at any time.⁵⁶

The basic point here is that the transcendental realist, lacking any equivalent to Kant's distinction between the transcendental and the empirical uses of the category of causality, cannot meet the Heterogeneity Requirement. Consequently, the transcendental realist cannot reject the inference

55. Jacques de Vaucanson (1709–1782) of France was famous for the automata he produced in 1737–1738, notably a duck that is said to have been able to flap its wings, digest grain, and defecate.

56. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 101.

from A3 to A4, and, ultimately, the transcendental realist cannot escape the monistic construal of "substance." For human beings, as embodied causes of empirical effects, will have to be regarded as exclusively empirical causes. So it will be impossible to regard human beings as uncaused causes capable of free action. Indeed, since God is the cause of the existence of human beings, hence the cause of their effects, it is to Him alone that a principle of activity may be ascribed. So God alone is substance and—since there are presumably no other options—His creatures, including human beings—are His accidents.

This argument, it must be said, goes by very quickly. What makes Kant so sure that the transcendental realist cannot meet the Heterogeneity Requirement in some way? What makes him so sure that the transcendental realist cannot somehow hold onto Monadic Individualism in a way that enables human beings to be both effects of God and substantial agents?

The way to think about Kant's argument, I propose, is to think about it as a hypothetical development of Kant's pre-critical position prior to the *Inaugural Dissertation*. By appealing to Kant's pre-critical writings, it is possible to reconstruct in a more impressive form the argument—call it argument B—that transcendental realists should be Holistic Monists:

- B1. God is all-sufficient.
- B2. God is the cause of the reality (i.e., essence) of substance.
- B3. God is the cause of the existence of substance.
- B4. Finite things in themselves are in space and/or time.
- B5. Whatever is in space and/or time is necessarily in space and/or time.
- B6. Whatever is in space and/or time is necessarily in thoroughgoing causal community with everything thing else in space and/or time at the same time.
- B7. It is not because of any properties intrinsic to a thing that it is in space and/or time is in space and/or time, or in thoroughgoing causal community with everything else in space and/or time at the same time.
- B8. Therefore, whatever is in space and/or time is in space and/or time as a necessary condition, not of its essence, but rather of its existence.
- B9. Only the cause of the existence of something could be the cause of necessary conditions for the existence of the thing that do not follow from its essence.

- B10. Therefore, God is the sole cause of the existence of space and time, and hence of the existence of thoroughgoing causal community.
- B11. Therefore, God is the sole substantial cause of the effects of everything in space and/or time.
- B12. Therefore, God is the sole substantial cause of all events in space and/or time.
- B13. Therefore, nothing in space and/or time—including human beings—is a substantial cause.
- B14. Therefore all things in space and/or time—including human beings—are accidents inhering in God.

Steps B1–3 are equivalent to steps A1–3, considered above. B4 expresses the transcendental realism against which the argument is directed. Crucially, this is transcendental realism *about space and time*. But not every transcendental realist needs to be a realist about space and time. For example, in his correspondence with Clarke, Leibniz is a transcendental realist about substances, but an empirical idealist about space and time, which he calls merely ideal.⁵⁷ Why does Kant fail even to consider this option?

One reason, as Kant explicitly notes, is that Mendelssohn is a transcendental realist about time. But another, more important reason is that, by 1768, Kant himself had seen that he could not be an empirical idealist about time but would have to be a transcendental realist, like Newton. Kant had not developed this position, because he had gone on to take the Copernican turn, but we may think of Kant as developing it here.

The thought behind B5 is that, if a thing is in time, then its being in time is a very deep fact about it. This fact permeates through all of its properties. Thus a temporal thing could not be the thing that it is if it were atemporal.

B6 expresses Kant's commitment to the holistic component of Holistic Monism, with respect to things in space and time. In his case, of course, the commitment is connected to Newtonianism and plays a crucial role in both his pre-critical and critical philosophies. In the pre-critical *New Elucidation* of 1755, Kant writes: "All substances, in so far as they are connected with each other in the same space, reciprocally interact with each other, and thus they are dependent on each other in respect of their determina-

57. See, for example, Leibniz (2000), L5.33.

tions."⁵⁸ As the principle of the Third Analogy, this principle is argued in the first *Critique* to be a necessary condition for the possibility of experience.⁵⁹

B7 is central to the critical philosophy, but it is a central feature of Kant's pre-critical view as well. Not long after the sentence just quoted from the *New Elucidation*, Kant says: "But no substance of any kind has the power of determining other substances, distinct from itself, by means of that which belongs to it internally [as we have proved]." This is half of what Kant calls the principle of coexistence, one of the two main principles of the pre-critical system.

The premise—as we have seen in Chapter 1—is based on broadly Leibnizian thoughts about substance and relation. On the one hand, to be a substance is to "have a separate existence, that is to say, an existence which can be completely understood independently of all other substances." This amounts to Monadic Individualism but not to the full-blown monadological position that substances can have only intrinsic properties. On the other hand, "a relation is a relative determination, that is to say, a determination which cannot be understood in a thing considered absolutely." So "it follows that a relation and its determining ground can neither of them be understood in terms of the existence of a substance, when that existence is posited in itself."⁶⁰ In other words, to consider a thing as a substance is to consider it absolutely or in itself, as a thing whose activity may be explained solely in virtue of its own intrinsic properties, without reference to any other substance. So consideration of a thing in itself cannot render intelligible the irreducibly relational determinations either of that thing or of any other thing, since irreducibly relational determinations are intelligible only through consideration of more than one relatum. But the spatial and temporal properties of things are irreducibly relational. So whatever is spatial and temporal is not so *in itself*. That is, if you consider something solely as a substance—as something whose activity is intelligible in virtue of its intrinsic properties alone—then you cannot, through that consideration, explain any of the thing's spatial, temporal, or causal properties, for all of those properties are irreducibly relational.

So far, Monadic Individualism has not been ruled out. In his pre-critical

58. Kant (1900–), ND, 1: 415.

59. Kant (1900–), KrV, A211/B257—A215/B262.

60. Kant (1900–), ND, 1: 413.

philosophy, Kant holds B1–7 and also maintains that there is a plurality of finite substances with intrinsic properties. Indeed, he holds that, although those properties cannot explain any spatial, temporal, or causal properties, it is nevertheless the case that nothing could have any spatial, temporal, or causal properties unless it had intrinsic properties rendering it a substance capable of bearing relational properties.

B8 follows immediately from B1–7 and prepares the way for B9, which is the central contention of Kant's pre-critical position. In the *New Elucidation*, Kant argues that, since all substances are in thoroughgoing community and so have irreducibly relational determinations, and since no substance has in itself the power to cause any relational determination, substances can only have the power to interact in community

in virtue of the connection, by means of which they are linked together in the idea entertained by the Infinite Being. . . . For the same indivisible act, which brings substances into existence and sustains them in existence, procures their reciprocal and universal dependence . . . the same principle, which establishes the existence of things, also brings it about that they are subject to this law. And, hence, reciprocal interaction is established by means of those determinations which attach to the origin of their existence.⁶¹

A similar claim is made in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, although now only with respect to the intelligible world and with some hesitation:

Granted that the inference from a given world to the unique cause of all its parts is valid, then, if conversely, the argument proceeded in the same from a given cause, which was common to all the parts, to the connection between them and, thus, to the form of the world (although I confess that this conclusion does not seem as clear to me), then the fundamental connection of substances would not be contingent but necessary, for all the substances are *sustained by a common principle*.⁶²

Kant need not think that B9 follows immediately from B1–8. He may think only that, given B1–8 and the strange idea of a necessary condition of something's existence that does not follow from its essence, the transcendental realist has no plausible alternative but to say that God—the cause of existence, hence the one who has power over it—is also the cause of

61. Kant (1900–), ND, 1: 415.

62. Kant (1900–), ID, 2: 409.

these necessary conditions of existence. Thus B9 challenges the transcendental realist to say what else the cause could be, a challenge that Kant believes has not been met so far.

B10 follows immediately from B1–9. It is B11 that sounds the death knell for Monadic Individualism. As we have seen in our discussion of premise B7, to consider something as a substance is to consider it as something whose effects are intelligible in virtue of its intrinsic properties. It has been argued that no intrinsic properties of finite things can explain any of their spatial, temporal, or causal properties. But then which effects of finite things *can* be explained by their intrinsic properties? It would seem that intrinsic properties do not explain *any* other properties of finite things. Rather, the *assumption* that finite things have intrinsic properties is introduced solely to explain the fact that finite things have nonintrinsic properties. But why is this necessary? It is necessary only if finite things are substances. But what grounds that assumption? Thanks to B1, an absolute cause is already available to explain everything else. So what warrant is there for introducing intrinsic properties that do no explanatory work that is not already being done?

In his pre-critical commitment to Monadic Individualism, Kant has lapsed into a conception of finite substance as unknown substratum, a conception that is foreign to the Leibnizian tradition, in which every metaphysical commitment should serve the goal of enabling an escape from the Agrippan trilemma. Here Kant rejects this conception of finite substance, since God alone is sufficient for the avoidance of the trilemma.

Two points are in order. First, it is true that, in the pre-critical writings, Kant thinks that he can hold onto Monadic Individualism and reject B11, in virtue of what Ameriks calls the *restraint argument*, which claims that there is no pure passivity in action.⁶³ However, This is not so much an argument as a *requirement*: nothing should be said to act, rather than to undergo an event, unless the intrinsic properties of that thing contribute to the intelligibility of the occurrence in question. Unfortunately, neither Kant's pre-critical system nor the version of transcendental realism considered here has the resources to meet the requirement with respect to finite things. Here Kant candidly draws the conclusion that no finite thing should be said to act.

Second, it is worth noting that the requirements of moral agency could not on their own constitute sufficient reason to assume Monadic Individ-

63. See Ameriks (1992), 263.

ualism. For the argument is that, without the distinction between transcendental and empirical uses of the category of causality, the transcendental realist has no coherent way to think of human beings as uncaused causes who act in virtue of their intrinsic properties. If moral agency requires that we think of ourselves in a way that is incoherent from the viewpoint of metaphysical theory, then moral agency is, in Kant's words, "mere delusion."

Once B11 is granted, it is easy to derive the Monistic component of Holistic Monism, expressed in B12–14.

2.5

Kant hardly intends to *recommend* Spinozism by arguing that it is the inevitable result of rigorous transcendental realism about space and time. He is setting the transcendental realist up for the argument that Spinozism—and hence transcendental realism—is antinomic and therefore untenable. In other words, transcendental realism is not only incompatible with the requirements of moral agency, but it is also theoretically refutable. Again, however, his argument is highly elliptical:

If they [i.e., those who regard space and time as determinations belonging to the existence of things in themselves] (like the otherwise so acute Mendelssohn) flatly allow both [space and time] to be conditions necessarily belonging only to the existence of finite and derived beings but not to that of the infinite original being, I do not see how they would justify themselves in making such a distinction, whence they get a warrant to do so, or even how they would avoid the contradiction they encounter when they regard existence in time as a determination attaching to finite things in themselves, while God is the cause of this existence but cannot be the cause of time (or space) itself (because this must be presupposed as a necessary *a priori* condition for the existence of things); and consequently, his causality with respect to the existence of these things must be conditioned and even temporally conditioned; and this would unavoidably have to bring in all that is contradictory to the concept of his infinity and independence.⁶⁴

Alas, this argument seems patently invalid. Those transcendental realists who regard space and time as necessarily pertaining to finite things, and who also see that the necessity for these irreducibly relational determina-

64. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 101.

tions cannot be grounded in the *essences* or absolutely inner determinations of finite things, may be said to concede that space and time are necessary conditions for the *existence* of finite things. Thus they may be said to agree that space and time must be presupposed for the causality by which one *finite* thing brings another into existence. But why must they also say that space and time must be presupposed for the *divine* causality on which finite things in general depend for their existence? What prevents them from regarding God as the cause, not only of finite things, but also of space and time as necessary conditions for the existence of finite things? Surely, what justifies the distinction between God and finite things—the distinction between a Being unconditioned by space and time and beings conditioned thereby—is just the absolute all-sufficiency of God that is presupposed from the start!

The fallacy seems even more evident in a parallel passage that Kant adds to the B-edition of the first *Critique*:

In natural theology, in thinking an object who not only can never be an object of intuition to us but cannot be an object of sensible intuition even to himself, we are careful to remove the conditions of time and space from his intuition—for all his knowledge must be intuition, and not *thought*, which always involves limitations. But with what right can we do this if we have previously made time and space forms of things in themselves, and such as would remain, as *a priori* conditions of the existence of things, even though the things themselves were removed. As conditions of all existence in general, they must be conditions of the existence of God.⁶⁵

Here Kant moves quickly from the premise that time and space are conditions of the existence of finite things in themselves to the conclusion that time and space are “conditions of all existence in general,” including divine existence. But what could possibly justify this move?

Two clues in these passages help us to reconstruct an argument that Kant may have in mind. The first clue is the parenthetical remark in the passage from the second *Critique* that time “must be presupposed as a necessary *a priori* condition for the existence of things.” The second clue is the remark in the passage from the first *Critique* about the intuitive character of divine knowledge, which can seem irrelevant.

The argument I propose—call it argument C—is as follows:

65. Kant (1900–), KrV, B71–72.

- C1. God is the cause of the existence of time.
- C2. God is the cause of the existence of finite things in themselves, which are necessarily in time.
- C3. The actuality of time is independent of the actual existence of things in time.
- C4. The actuality of time is a presupposition of the existence of finite things in themselves.
- C5. Every presupposition of the existence of something finite is
 - a. either an infinite actuality, which follows immediately from the actuality of God;
 - b. or a limited version of an infinite actuality, which is derivative from the actuality of God through the mediation of a divine self-limitation.
- C6. The actuality of time is not derivative from the actuality of God through the mediation of a divine act.
- C7. The actuality of time follows immediately from the actuality of God.
- C8. God is not the cause of the existence of time; rather, time is a presupposition of the existence of God.

C1 follows from B10—God is the sole cause of the existence of space and time, and hence of the existence of thoroughgoing causal community—which follows from B1–9. Underlying these steps, we should recall, is the idea of God as all-sufficient, as enabling escape from the Agrippan trilemma.

C2 is an expression of transcendental realism about time, as well as Kant's point (B5) about the depth at which a thing is temporal if it is temporal. If something is in time, then, we might say, time is the medium within which all its properties are articulated.

C3 is, I think, what Kant has in mind when he says, in the passage from the first *Critique*, that the transcendental realist about time and space renders them "such as would remain, as *a priori* conditions of the existence of things, even though the things themselves were removed." This is supposed to follow from arguments against Leibniz's relationalism, such as the argument from incongruent counterparts put forward by Kant in 1768. Its importance here will shortly become evident.

C4 expresses what I think Kant means when he remarks parenthetically that time "must be presupposed." On some occasions, at least, it is plausible

that Kant does not use the term *presupposition* ("Voraussetzung") lightly, to mean an assumption. He seems to use it to signify more specifically *whatever is necessary on the supposition of an intelligible world*—or, in Leibnizian terminology, whatever is hypothetically necessary.⁶⁶ Given this construal, C4 follows from C2 and C3.

C5 spells out the two ways in which, on Kant's view, presuppositions can be actual. Presuppositions of the first kind are properties that God has in virtue of being the all-sufficient *ens realissimum*. These are realities—*intrinsic* properties capable of playing a grounding role—that are absolutely infinite in degree of intensity. Presuppositions of the second kind are finite versions of the divine realities.

To understand this, we need to understand what Kant himself thinks about divine knowledge and creation. Admittedly, we are concerned here with a transcendental realist, not with Kant. But, as I have suggested, we have to think of the target as *the transcendental realist Kant would hypothetically be*. Kant's own picture is as follows. God knows Himself, with a "knowledge [that] must be intuition, and not *thought*, which always involves limitations." Thus what God knows is not a mere concept or possibility but an actuality. In knowing Himself, God knows the absolutely infinite realities whose actuality follows immediately from His own actuality. These divine realities are presuppositions of the first kind. Since they are the archetypes or sources of all reality, God knows all that is possible in knowing Himself. This is what Kant means when he says that there is no distinction between possibility and actuality with respect to God. He does not mean, however, that there are no such things as unactualized possibilities for God to actualize in an act of creation. Rather, creation involves God's free act of choosing to limit some of His realities in determinate ways, thus choosing to actualize finite realities that constitute actual individuals. These finite realities are presuppositions of the second kind.

C6 states that the actuality of time is not a presupposition of the second kind. Kant offers no argument for it in either the passage from the first

66. See, for example, Kant (1900–), KrV, A572/B600, where Kant says that the principle of thoroughgoing determination "considers everything . . . in relation to *the whole of possibility*, as the sum total of all predicates of things in general; and by presupposing that as a condition *a priori*, it represents every thing as deriving its own possibility from the share it has in that whole of possibility." See also the description of the postulates of pure practical reason as "*presuppositions* having a necessarily practical reference" in Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 132. I am grateful to Christian Johnson for pointing out the importance of Kant's usage.

Critique or the passage from the second. However, his thinking may be reconstructed on the basis of a related *Reflexion*:

Space and time are such necessary *a priori* determinations of the existence of things that if they were determinations of things in themselves, then not only would they along with all the consequences that pertain to them have to be made into conditions of the existence of divinity, but, on account of their infinity, absolute necessity, and necessity, they would even have to be made into divine properties. For if one has once made them into determinations of things in themselves, then there would be no reason why they should be limited to finite beings. If theology is not to contradict itself, it sees itself as necessitated to make both mere form of our sensibility.⁶⁷

One point that Kant seems to be making in this note is that time is infinite. Of course time is infinite *extensively*, not *intensively*. But it is unclear how the extensive infinity of time could be derived from the intensively infinite realities traditionally ascribed to God. As Kant argues in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, time is an infinite whole that is prior to its parts, and the representation of time is primitive, underivable from any other representations. So it seems that time could not be a presupposition of the second kind because it is unclear how time could be derivative from some intensively infinite reality by limitation.

If time is not a presupposition of the second kind, then it must be a presupposition of the first (C7). But then time is a divine property, not the result of an act of divine creation. Consequently (C8), God is not the cause of the actuality of time. For time is not a creature.

At this point, the transcendental realist is in trouble because C8 contradicts C1. We have an antinomy: on the assumption of transcendental realism, God may be shown both to be and not to be the cause of the actuality of time.

Since the thesis was derived from God's all-sufficiency, the antithesis also contradicts God's all-sufficiency. As Kant puts it, "consequently [God's] causality with respect to the existence of these things must be conditioned and even temporally conditioned; and this would unavoidably have to bring in all that is contradictory to the concept of his infinity and independence." If we recall that to be in time is to be in time necessarily, then

67. R6317, in Kant (1900–), 18: 626, cited by Guyer (1987), 353.

we can see that, if God is in time, then all His properties—including His causality—become articulated in time. But then His causality becomes empirical, not transcendental, and the supposedly pure, intellectual idea of God has become tainted by the sensible. Consequently—notwithstanding the argument I reconstructed earlier with the help of Jacobi and Pistorius—Holistic Monism cannot meet the Heterogeneity Requirement and cannot solve the Third Antinomy.

2.6

Is argument C truly a refutation of Spinozism? I will argue that it indeed presents a serious problem for Newtonianism, including a version of Kant's pre-critical position that accepts argument B. However, it is far from clear that argument C is a refutation of Holistic Monism more generally, and Spinoza himself has resources that suggest interesting responses to it.

Two introductory remarks are called for. First, C9 follows from C8 only on an assumption about causation whose exact content—and force against Holistic Monism—is unclear. It could be the strong assumption that causation—either in general or at least in the case of God—must involve *modal transcendence*, such that the cause could be actual when the effect is not. Or it could be the weaker assumption that causation—either in general or at least in the case of God—must involve an *asymmetry*, so that there is some way in which the cause conditions the effect but the effect does not condition the cause. In any event, the Holistic Monist is committed to the view that the absolute is the cause or principle of the unity of the totality, and that the absolute could not be actual without the totality also being actual. If the assumption that justifies the inference of C9 from C8 is the assumption that (divine) causation requires modal transcendence, then the Holistic Monist rejects that assumption, for reasons given above. So the Holistic Monist need not accept C9 and can avoid the antinomy. If, however, the assumption is that (divine) causation involves an asymmetry, then the Holistic Monist is obliged to accept C9 only if there is no way in which the relationship between the absolute and the totality is asymmetric. But this remains to be seen. The relationship lacks the asymmetry that comes with modal transcendence, but there may be asymmetries of other kinds.

Second, I want to add to the discussion another distinction with respect to infinity. We have met the distinction between extensive and intensive infinity. I now want to introduce the distinction between *relative infinity*

and *absolute infinity*. One way to form a conception of infinity is first to think of something finite in some respect, then to negate the finitude of that thing. This yields a conception of relative infinity. For example, think of something that is in a determinate region of space, then negate the limitations of its presence, and you will think of something that is omnipresent in the sense that it is present throughout space. Or think of something that endures over a determinate stretch of time, then negate the limitations of its endurance, and you will think of something that is eternal in the sense that it exists at every moment of time.

Now, one might express a line of thought that underlies C6–8 as follows. If one conceives divine infinity by negating the limitations of finite things in space and time, then one will conceive God only as relatively, not as absolutely infinite. But a relatively infinite God would be conditioned by space and time, and could not be all-sufficient. If time were a divine property *in this sense*, then God could only be relatively infinite. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, Kant's account of the derivation of finite realities from God's infinite realities by limitation seems designed in part to avoid this problem. Kant starts from a positive conception of infinity and derives finitude by negating infinity. He does not start from finitude and derive a conception of infinity by negation, which could yield only relative, not absolute infinity. His procedure is, we might say, *progressive*, not *regressive*, since it starts from the absolute.

The connection between these two points is as follows. Although the Holistic Monist is committed to the view that the absolute and the totality are mutually necessary conditions, she may nevertheless maintain that the absolute is the cause of the totality, and not vice versa, because of a *derivational asymmetry*: the totality is progressively derivable from the absolute, but the absolute is not regressively derivable from the totality. Indeed, Kant himself is committed to this asymmetry, which can alone give rise to absolute, not relative infinity.⁶⁸ To be sure, Kant may think that derivational asymmetry alone is not sufficient for causality and that, say, modal transcendence is also required. But the Holistic Monist has an argument against modal transcendence, to which Kant has no obvious response. Consequently, the question whether a particular version of Holistic Monism is refuted by argument C may be reduced to the question whether that version has an adequately progressive derivation to support the claim that the ab-

68. See 31–33 above.

solute is the cause of the totality. In short, Holistic Monism without Derivation Monism is in trouble, but Holistic Monism with Derivation Monism is not.

Although Kant does not explicitly mention Newton in either the passage from the first *Critique* or the passage from the second, it is clear that Newton is not far below the surface of Kant's argument. Indeed, the argument is a version of a charge leveled at Newton by Leibniz, among others.⁶⁹ In the early eighteenth century, Newtonians were forced to distinguish their position from Spinozism, which was in turn identified with atheism on the grounds that what it called God was a relatively infinite spatio-temporal being who was therefore not God at all.⁷⁰

More recently, in a series of important essays, J. E. McGuire has drawn on Newton's unpublished papers to argue that Newton is not committed to what he calls pantheism—a position usually ascribed to Spinoza.⁷¹ Although McGuire's arguments are both insightful and instructive, his reconstruction of Newton's response to the pantheism charge shows why Newton lacks the resources to respond to Kant's deeper objection. McGuire says, "Notice that Newton is not embracing pantheism, since he wishes to assert the contrary truth that God is not identical with space."⁷² For McGuire then, pantheism, is the identification of God with space. Although Newton can respond to an accusation of pantheism by distinguishing God from space—and, presumably, time—this is insufficient to defend Newton against the Kantian charge that his God is only relatively infinite, and hence conditioned by space and time. To defend Newton against the Kantian charge, it must be shown not only that Newton can distinguish God from space and time, but also that he can justify the claim that God is *causally prior* to space and time, and is in some way *unconditioned* by them.

As McGuire shows, there can be no doubt that Newton distinguishes between the infinity of God and the infinity of space. First, perhaps fol-

69. See, for example, L5.50, in Leibniz and Clarke (2000): "If the reality of space and time, is necessary to the immensity and eternity of God; if God must be in space; if being in space, is a property of God; he will in some measure, depend upon time and space, and stand in need of them."

70. Criticism of Spinozism is one of the main concerns of Clarke (1998).

71. See the essays collected in McGuire (1995). Kant could have known of Newton's own position only the tip of the iceberg visible in the published works and the *Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*.

72. McGuire (1995), 13.

lowing Pierre Gassendi, Newton rejects the idea that existence is a real attribute or perfection, a constituent of essence.⁷³ Second, he conceives infinity not as a real attribute or perfection that could be a constituent of a thing's essence, but rather as a determination of the existence of a thing *along with its intrinsic perfections*. Thus, infinity alone implies not infinite perfection, but only the raising to an infinite degree of whatever perfections a thing possesses in virtue of its essence.⁷⁴ In principle, then, it is possible for there to be infinite beings other than God, other than the most perfect being. Indeed, third, there is at least one infinite being other than God—namely, space.⁷⁵ Now, like Descartes and Kant, Newton insists that an adequate conception of an infinite being can be formed, not by negation of the limits of finite beings, but only in a positive manner, subsequent to which an adequate conception of finite beings can be formed:

Should one say further that we do not understand what an infinite being is, save by negating the limitations of a finite being, and that this is a negative and faulty conception, I deny this. For the limit or boundary is the restriction or negation of greater reality or existence in the limited being, and the less we conceive of any being to be constrained by limits, the more we observe something to be attributed to it, that is, the more positively we conceive it. And thus by negating all limits the conception

73. McGuire (1995), 11: "As it stands, the text does not allow us to state categorically that Newton either affirms or denies that existence is a predicate. He certainly denies that it is a real attribute, property or quality of anything. However, to say this is perfectly compatible with saying that existence is a transcendental predicate." The textual basis is a passage from Newton's drafts for Des Maizeaux's preface to the French translation of the Leibniz–Clarke correspondence: "The Reader is desired to observe, that wherever in the following papers through unavoidable narrowness of language, infinite space or Immensity & endless duration or Eternity, are spoken of as *Qualities* or *Properties* of the substance wch is Immense or Eternal, the terms *Quality* & *Property* are not taken in that sense wherein they are vulgarly, by the writers of *Logick* & *Metaphysics* applied to *matter*; but in such a sense as only implies them to be modes of existence in all beings, & unbounded *modes* & consequences of the existence of a substance which is really necessarily & substantially Omnipresent & Eternal; Which existence is neither a substance nor a quality, but the existence of a substance with all its attributes properties & qualities, & yet is so modified by place and duration that those modes cannot be rejected without rejecting the existence." For the text and its history, see Koyré and Cohen (1962), 96–97.

74. McGuire (1995), 17. As McGuire explains, Newton is thus able to "overcome Descartes' scruples, expressed in exchanges with Henry More, about calling space infinite. See Newton (2004), 25: "But I see what Descartes feared, namely that if he should consider space infinite, it would perhaps become God because of the perfection of infinity. But by no means, for infinity is not perfection except when it is attributed to perfect things."

75. Newton (2004), 23: "Space is extended infinitely in all directions."

becomes maximally positive. "End" [finis] is a word negative with respect to perception, and thus "infinity," since it is the negation of a negation (that is, of ends), will be a word maximally positive with respect to our perception and understanding, though it seems grammatically negative.⁷⁶

However, Newton differs from Descartes by affirming that we can form a *positive* conception of the extensive infinity of space, and indeed that such a positive conception is crucial for mathematical practice.⁷⁷ So Newton's commitment to the infinity of space does not entangle him in the view that, since God is infinite, space is God. He can distinguish between extensive and intensive infinity.

There is also no doubt that Newton *wants* to say, not only that God is not identical with space, but also that God is *prior* to space. He says, for example, that space is an "emanative effect" of God and that God "constitutes" space.⁷⁸ But I see no evidence that he has any *positive* account of the constitutive causality in question, by which to justify these assertions.

Indeed, it is crucial to note what would be required for their justification. The danger, it should be recalled, is that an infinite cause is posited as the ground of all finite beings, but, if the cause is to be absolutely and not merely relatively infinite, then it must be heterogeneous to its finite effects. If the infinite cause is known *only* through its effects—that is, through the existence of finite beings and through the need to explain that existence—then it seems impossible to meet this Heterogeneity Requirement. For one's conception of the infinite cause and its causality can draw only on the resources made available by one's conception of finite things. Thus, if one is to meet the Heterogeneity Requirement, then one must be able to provide some positive account of the infinite cause and its causality—that is, some account that does not draw only on the resources made available by one's conception of finite things. It must be possible to give a *progressive* account

76. Newton (2004), 24.

77. For the relevant texts and an analysis of Newton's arguments, see McGuire (1995), 151–189.

78. Using language drawn from More, Newton speaks of space as the "emanative effect" of God three times in "De gravitatione." See Newton (2004), 21, 25, 26. For talk of constitution, see Newton (1999), 941: "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration and space, but he endures and is present. He endures always and is present everywhere, and by existing always and everywhere he constitutes duration and space." On the traditional understanding of emanative causation, see Carriero (1990). For a deflationary account of Newton's appeal to emanative causation, see Stein (2002), 268–269.

of the infinite cause and its causality, not only a *regressive* account that argues from effect to cause.

Newton is notoriously cagey about the metaphysical presuppositions of his position. He makes few of them public, and when he does so, it is often through an intermediary, so that the level of Newton's involvement in the debate and the degree of his commitment to what is said remain unclear. For example, in drafts of an *Advertissement au Lecteur* sent to Pierre Des Maizeaux for a French translation, Newton writes the following, which in the published version is attributed by Des Maizeaux to Samuel Clarke:

... when the Hebrews called God *Makom*, the place in which we live & move & have our being & yet did not mean that space is God in a literal sense. For they used to speak of God by figures & allusions & put space for his omnipresence for a figure. And so space & duration are by the writers of Logick & Metaphysicks called quantities & with respect to God's ubiquity & omnipresence they have a nearer relation to the Predicaments of *Ubi* & *Quando* than to that of Quality & therefore where they are called Qualities the Reader is to understand it with a figure.⁷⁹

Newton's intention here appears to be to prevent the reader from inferring that, since Clarke, speaking as a Newtonian, characterizes space as God's "property"⁸⁰—that is, in scholastic terminology, a necessary determination that is not part of His essence—Newton must think that God's existence, like the existence of finite things, is necessarily conditioned by space. So Newton is concerned to avoid the problems pointed out by Leibniz and, later, by Kant. But Newton offers no positive account of God's causal priority to space. He does not, for example, articulate the emanative, constitutive causality mentioned in his early, unpublished writings. Instead, he just insists that theology is unavoidably figurative—that theology must, in some nonliteral way, apply to God expressions properly applied to finite things.

This strongly suggests that Newtonian theology is regressive, not progressive. Newton seems to think that the *existence* of God can be demonstrated only regressively, not progressively in the manner of Descartes' on-

79. Koyré and Cohen (1962), 101.

80. See Clarke (1998), 31: "Infinite space is nothing but abstract immensity or infinity, even as infinite duration is abstract eternity. And it would be just as proper to say that eternity is the essence of the supreme cause as to say that immensity is so. Indeed, they seem both to be but modes of an essence or substance incomprehensible to us." See Leibniz and Clarke (2000), C5.42.

tological argument. But Newton also seems to draw on analogies suggested by finite things whenever he characterizes *what* God is. In the *General Scholium*, he writes:

We know him [i.e., God] only by his properties and attributes and by the wisest and best construction of things and their final causes, and we admire him because of his perfections, but we venerate and worship him only because of his dominion. For we worship him as servants, and a god without dominion, providence, and final causes is nothing other than fate and nature. No variation in things arises from metaphysical necessity, which be the same always and everywhere. All the diversity of created things, each in its place and time, could only have arisen from the ideas and the will of a necessarily existing being. But God is said allegorically to see, hear, speak, laugh, love, hate, desire, give, receive, rejoice, be angry, fight, build, form, construct. For all discourse about God is derived from a certain similitude from things human, which while not perfect is nevertheless a similitude of some kind.⁸¹

That God is an entity in the highest degree perfect, all agree. But the highest idea of the perfection of an entity is that it should be one substance, simple, indivisible, living and life-giving, always everywhere of necessity existing, in the highest degree understanding all things, freely willing good things; by his will effecting things possible; communicating as far as is possible his own similitude to the more noble effects; containing all things in himself as their principle and location; decreeing and ruling all things by means of his substantial presence (as the thinking part of a man perceives the appearances of things brought into the brain and thence rules its own body); and constantly co-operating with all things according to accurate laws, as being the foundation and cause of the whole of nature, except where it is good to act otherwise.⁸²

Some of these characterizations are regressive in the sense that they express only what is required for God to be the infinite cause that renders finite things intelligible. The others seem analogical in character, as the parenthetical remark makes explicit. In general, it seems clear that this conception of the *ens perfectissimum* is formed by considering of the thinking and willing "part of man" and by raising to an infinite degree the perfections intrinsic to the human being.⁸³

81. Newton (1999), 942–943.

82. Cited by McGuire (1995), 216, from the David Gregory MS. 245, fol. 14a, Library of the Royal Society.

83. McGuire (1995), 18, says that, "on Newton's showing God is not an *ens perfectissimum*."

It should be no surprise, then, that Newton explicitly characterizes God as spatially omnipresent and temporally sempiternal—hence as what Kant would regard as a cause that is only *relatively* infinite because conditioned by space and time. No doubt, Newton would protest that he does not mean that God is present at every point of space and time *in the way that finite things are*. But he shows no sign of possessing the resources for a positive conception of divine infinity. Since he himself acknowledges the need for a positive conception of infinity that is prior to one's conception of the finite, and since he possesses a positive conception of spatial infinity grounded in his mathematics, Newtonian theology seems to be in serious trouble. If we are supposed to have a positive conception of divine infinity that is distinct from the positive conception we have of spatial infinity, then Newton should tell us what it is. But this he never does.

It was from problems of this sort, we should recall, that Kant's pre-critical program sought to save Newtonianism by providing it with an adequate metaphysical foundation that included *inter alia* an adequately progressive proof of God's existence as *ens realissimum*, along with a derivation of finite realities from divine realities. By 1766, however, as we saw in Chapter 1, he had realized that, although he had avoided Newton's problematic sensibilization of theology, he had developed a psychology that ran into an analogous problem. For his account of the mind relied too heavily on regression from physical phenomena. On Kant's pre-critical view, substances were spatially located, not in virtue of their absolutely inner determinations, for spatial location is an irreducibly relational determination, but rather in virtue of the community of forces within which substances are active insofar as they exist.

Although this was intended primarily as an account of the spatial location of physical substances, it was hard for Kant to avoid extending the account to the spatial location of minds, which interact with physical substances and, moreover, are embodied in spatially located physical particulars. But if physical substances are spatially located in virtue of their motive forces, are mental substances spatially located in virtue of forces of some other unknown kind? As Kant came to see, his conception of the intelligible world, like Swedenborg's, was based on analogies suggested by phenomena in the empirical world. This is why, in the *Inaugural Dissertation* and then in the critical philosophy itself, Kant took such pains to

This is clearly false, as the passage cited shows. McGuire must mean that Newton's conception of the *ens perfectissimum* is not traditional.

distinguish the intellectual from the sensible, which led him to Kantian dualism.

It now turns out, however, from Kant's perspective in 1788, that his pre-critical system was in trouble, not only in its psychology, but in its theology too. In 1766, he had thought otherwise:

I am not speaking of the Infinite Spirit, who is its Creator and Sustainer. For the concept of the spirit-nature of the latter is easy, for it is merely negative and consists in denying that the properties of matter belong to it, for they are incompatible with an infinite and absolutely necessary substance. On the other hand, in the case of a spirit-substance, such as the human soul, which is supposed to exist in union with matter, the following difficulty arises: on the one hand, I am supposed to think such substances as existing in a reciprocal relation with physical beings so that they constitute wholes, while on the other hand I am supposed to think of the only kind of combination we know—that which occurs among material beings—as being canceled.⁸⁴

Here Kant had suggested that he could avoid problems about God's spirit-nature because the concept of that spirit-nature "is merely negative." If he had meant that his conception of God as "infinite and absolutely necessary substance" is merely negative, then, as we have seen, he would have been in trouble. For then he could conceive God only as a relatively infinite version of a finite thing and could not satisfy the Agrippan worry to which he thinks theology must respond. Indeed, he would then have had to follow Newton in conceiving God's spatiality by analogy with the spatiality of the mind, and he would have lacked the resources for any conception of God other than as omnipresent virtue of some unknown divine force. However, Kant instead must have meant that only his conception of God's *spirit-nature* is merely negative, while his conception of God as "infinite and absolutely necessary substance" is positive. The positive conception implies that God cannot be material, for no material substance can be absolutely infinite and necessary. This in turn allows us to form a merely negative conception of God as immaterial or spiritual.

In 1768, however, Kant had realized that he could no longer hold, as he had since the beginning of his career, that space and time were explainable in terms of Newtonian forces. Had he failed to take the Copernican turn, he would have become, in critical terminology, a transcendental re-

84. Kant (1900-), TGS, 2: 321n.

alist rather than an empirical idealist about space and time. Kant's view in 1788 must be, then, that, if he had failed to take the Copernican turn, he would have become vulnerable to arguments B and C. In short, he would have become committed to Holistic Monism without Derivation Monism, and his theology would have become antinomic.

What, then, of Spinoza himself, and those influenced by him? If one takes seriously the geometric format of the *Ethics*—and I do not say that it is always easy to do this—then one cannot doubt that Spinoza intends to develop an unabashedly progressive account of the absolutely infinite first cause and of its causality. When Kant speaks of “Spinozism, in which space and time are essential determinations of the original being itself, while the things dependent upon it (ourselves, therefore, included) are not substances, but merely accidents inhering in it,” he is open to the charge that he is imposing upon Spinoza a foreign conception of substance that ignores Spinoza's own views about substance, attribute, and mode. Such an imposition leads to the disastrous construal of Spinoza's propositions about substance and its attributes as if they were propositions about what we ordinarily call things—Spinoza's modes—and their properties.

To be sure, Spinoza states that “God is a thinking thing” and that “God is an extended thing.”⁸⁵ But what he means by this, as he himself says, is that thought and extension are attributes of God. Whatever exactly this may mean, it certainly means that it would be entirely illegitimate to assume that whatever follows from the propositions that “René is a thinking thing” and that “This table is an extended thing” also follows from similar-sounding propositions about God. The linguistic similarity between propositions about modes—whether they are finite or relatively infinite—and propositions about absolutely infinite substance masks what Spinoza takes to be a fundamental ontological difference. If one does not acknowledge this difference, then one forecloses the possibility of interpreting Spinoza in a way that could give rise to a conception of the absolute first principle and its causality which could meet the Heterogeneity Requirement.

This is not the place to develop a detailed interpretation of either Spinoza's own view or German idealist versions of his basic notions.⁸⁶ It is the

85. E2P1–2, Spinoza (2002), 245.

86. For example, one may understand what the German idealists call potences as analogues of Spinoza's attributes. A potence is a determination of the totality, relative to which an individuation of parts is established as possible. So there can be many potences, each expressing one and the same absolute principle under a different aspect. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel all make use of this

place to say, rather, that nothing Kant says in the passages from the first and second *Critiques* considered here refutes the Spinozistic project of combining Holistic Monism with Derivation Monism.

It should also be noted that, from a Spinozistic point of view, Kant's procedure is *not progressive enough* and must render Kant's God *too homogeneous* with finite creatures. For it is Kant's view that we may ascribe to God all and only those intrinsic properties that involve no negation and that are then raised to an infinite degree.⁸⁷ Thus we start from intrinsic properties ascribed to beings other than God, and we end by ascribing *analogous* properties to God, or rather by ascribing to God original properties of which the intrinsic properties ascribed to finite beings are analogical copies. Thus, in his pre-critical discussion of God as *ens realissimum*, Kant gives two arguments to show that God has understanding and will. The first is that both are "true realities, and they can both co-exist together with the greatest possible reality in one thing." That this is so, he says, is simply an immediate judgment of the understanding." Second, if God did not have understanding and will, it would be impossible for God to be the ground of possible beings with understanding and will, because "understanding and will are properties which are capable of the highest degree of reality." One could therefore not ascribe any other realities to God that could serve as their ground.

Here we see in action the procedure described in the lectures. For Kant's first argument is that the properties of understanding and will survive the *via negationis*, the way of negation, and his second argument is that infinite versions of those properties can and must be ascribed to God in virtue of His role as *ens realissimum*, given that finite beings with understanding and will actually exist.

Kant defends his use of analogy between the properties of finite beings and the properties of God as follows:

Analogy does not consist in an imperfect similarity of things to one another, as it is commonly taken; for in this case that would be something very uncertain. . . . If, however, we understand analogy to be the perfect similarity of relationships (not of things but relationships), or in short

notion, which Schelling attributes to Karl August Eschenmayer. For a helpful discussion of Schelling's early use of the term and of Hegel's attempt to use it to rethink the relationship between concept and intuition, see Redding (1996), 57–71.

87. See 64–65, 75 above.

what the mathematicians understand by *proportion*, then we will be satisfied at once; we can then form a concept of God and of his predicate which will be so sufficient that we will never need anything more. But obviously we will not assume any relations of magnitude (for this belongs to mathematics); but rather we will assume a relation of cause to effect, or even better, of ground to its consequence, so as to infer in an entirely philosophical manner. For just as in the world one thing is regarded as the cause of another thing when it contains the ground of this thing, so in the same way we regard the whole world as a consequence of its ground in God, and argue from the analogy.⁸⁸

Spinoza, however, follows Maimonides in rejecting any analogical predication whatsoever with respect to God:

Furthermore, I have something here to say about the intellect and will that is usually attributed to God. If will and intellect do indeed pertain to the eternal essence of God, one must understand in the case of both these attributes something very different from the meaning widely entertained. For the intellect and will that would constitute the essence of God would have to be vastly different from human intellect and will, and would have no point of agreement except the name. They could be no more alike than the celestial constellation of the Dog and the dog that barks.⁸⁹

A readily available argument for this conclusion is that God is absolutely infinite but, supposing that intellect and will are—as Kant and many others claim—“true realities,” to raise them to infinity would enable one to conceive only a relatively infinite intellect and will. In other words, Kant worries about merely relative conceptions of *extensive* infinity, but he should be no less worried about merely relative conceptions of *intensive* infinity.

Neither Spinoza nor the German idealists agree with Kant that intellect and will are “true realities” that survive the *via negationis* and are entirely positive. For Kant, this is simply “an immediate judgment of the understanding.” In other words, he thinks that it is *obvious*. But for Spinoza, this immediate judgment is nothing more than a *prejudice* that cannot withstand examination. Here we reach perhaps the deepest level of disagreement between Kant and Holistic Monists, including German idealists, about the hypothetically necessary character of the transcendently real. Namely,

88. Kant (1900–), 28: 1023.

89. E1P17, Spinoza (2002), 229.

although Newtonian considerations about space, time, and community force Kant to conclude that no intrinsic properties are to be found in the empirical world, he still holds onto the idea of intrinsic properties. Even in his critical period, he thinks that reason demands intrinsic properties in transcendently real things, and he continues to think that purified versions of intellect and will are eminent examples of intrinsic properties. In contrast, Holistic Monists see no role for intrinsic properties *whatsoever*—unless one wants to call the attributes of substance, or their equivalents in some German idealist system, intrinsic properties, which is in a way correct but also misleading.⁹⁰

Although it is in specific response to Newtonian physics that Kant develops the notion of a relational framework, within which objects can be individuated even when they lack positive transcendental reality, we may think of German idealists as freeing that notion from its original context and using it against Kant to dispute the contention that intellect and will are examples of intrinsic properties. Thus, Fichte and Hegel undertake to show that one could have neither intellect nor will—neither theoretical nor practical reason—unless one were conscious of oneself as situated within a relational framework of objects other than one's body and of subjects other than oneself.⁹¹

2.7

In light of the arguments considered in this chapter, it is understandable that someone sympathetic to Kant but influenced by Jacobi's presentation of Spinozism could reach the following conclusions. First, Kant has not

90. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), I/4, VDWL: 190: "The object of idealism is precisely this I in itself." In a footnote, Fichte remarks, "I have hitherto avoided this expression in order not to occasion any representation of an I as a thing in itself. My concern was in vain; consequently, I will now employ this expression, because I do not see whom I have to spare." As principle of the *omnitudo realitatis*, the absolute I may be said to be "in itself," for it alone is intelligible through determinations that are "in"—that is, derivative from—it. But the absolute I is not a thing or, more generally, an entity at all. So it is not a thing in itself and, indeed, the sense in which it is "in itself" is quite different from the sense in which an *ens per se* is said to be "in itself" in virtue of its intrinsic properties.

91. In this light, it should also be clear that German idealists need not be limited to Kant's—or anyone else's—list of faculties. For Spinoza, absolutely infinite substance must express itself in an infinite number of attributes, although we know only two. A post-Kantian Holistic Monist should see no principled reason to limit the number of faculties, understood as capacities to render things intelligible within a relational framework. Thus there is in principle no limit to the number of what Hegel, in PhG, calls shapes of consciousness.

refuted Holistic Monism about the transcendently real—that is, here, the hypothetically necessary structure of the in itself—but rather Holistic Monism has refuted any version of Kant's position that remains committed to Monadic Individualism about the transcendently real. Thus a version of Kant's transcendental idealism committed to Monadic Individualism would be outflanked by a version of transcendental realism committed to Holistic Monism. For the latter would be better able to meet the Heterogeneity Requirement than the former, thus better able to resolve the Third Antinomy and, to put the point in more general terms, better able to resolve the complex problematic—with its Agrippan, Leibnizian, and Newtonian/Humean layers—to which Kant himself is responding. Second, if transcendental idealism is to be saved, then either Kant's texts must be interpreted as committed to Holistic Monism rather than Monadic Individualism, or, if this cannot be done, a post-Kantian transcendental idealism committed to Holistic Monism must be constructed.

As an example of the kind of view that seems to outflank transcendental idealism committed to Monadic Individualism about the transcendently real, consider Maimon's avowedly Spinozistic interpretation of what he takes to be Leibniz's esoteric teaching:

God, as an infinite representational power, thinks from all eternity of all possible beings, i.e. He thinks Himself limited in all possible ways. He does not think discursively like us, but rather His thoughts are at the same time presentations. If one objects that we have no concept of such a manner of thinking, then I answer: we certainly have a concept of it, since we possess it in part. All concepts of mathematics are thought by us, and at the same time presented as real objects through construction *a priori*. Thus we are in this respect similar to God. No wonder, then, that the ancient philosophers valued mathematics highly and wanted to let nobody who was unskilled in that science enter their lecture halls. Not because, as one commonly pretends, the mathematical method is very advantageous in philosophy, but rather because mathematics teaches us the difference between merely discursive and real thinking. A regular decahedron, i.e. a corporeal figure enclosed within ten equal sides, is logically a correct concept because it contains no contradiction and yet its construction is impossible, consequently it is objectively false, or it has no object and so on. Thus God thinks all real objects, not merely according to the principle of contradiction so highly prized in philosophy, but rather as we (albeit in a more complete manner) think the objects of mathematics, i.e., He produces them immediately through thought.

The harmony between the substances thus rests on the fact that they

all express one and the same being. They must be limited in various ways, because God thinks them as limited in all possible ways, and God must think them as limited in all possible ways, because otherwise He could think nothing outside Himself.—They are to be compared with different equations of one and the same curved line, which express exactly the same being, and from all of which exactly the same properties may be derived. “Bodies and souls stand in reciprocity with one another” means for Leibniz nothing other than that body is an expression of soul. The latter (insofar as it has clear representations) is substance proper. The former is exactly the same substance in appearance (*substantia phaenomenon*). Thus all their modifications are reciprocal? “Bodies arise from monads” means this much: in accordance with the reciprocal interaction of monads, according to their manifold relations, produces in us (since we cannot understand all these relations clearly) the appearance of bodies.⁹²

Note, first, that the system sketched is committed to Holistic Monism. It leaves no room for intrinsic properties whatsoever. Second, it involves Kant’s view of divine knowledge as intuition. Third, whereas Kant regards our ability to demonstrate theorems by construction as a mark of our finitude, Maimon regards this ability as the image of God within us.

This last point is of great significance for German idealist methodology, as I will show in Chapter 5. For the moment, Maimon’s connection of divine cognition with human construction in mathematics is useful insofar as it helps to answer an objection. So far, I have dealt with an auxiliary argument for transcendental idealism—the irreducible relationality of the empirical, considered in Chapter 1—and with only one of Kant’s main arguments—the Third Antinomy, considered in this chapter. But I have said nothing about what might well be regarded as Kant’s central argument: the argument in the Aesthetic that geometrical knowledge, which is both apodictic and guaranteed to apply to any object of outer sense, would be impossible if space and time were not forms of specifically human sensibility. In order to conclude that Spinozism outflanked transcendental idealism committed to Monadic Individualism, would the German idealists not have to think that Spinozism provides a solution for the problem of geometrical knowledge, as well as for the Third Antinomy?

By reading Maimon, in addition to Spinoza, the German idealists could

92. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 42–43.

easily have thought just this. For Maimon develops the view, hinted at in the passage quoted above, that we can attain, through construction in sensible intuition, knowledge guaranteed to apply to empirical objects, only if our constructions are obscure images of the purely intellectual construction through which those empirical objects are generated from the absolute first principle—in short, only if the *a priori* conditions of our sensibility and the *a priori* conditions of being an object of the senses are both expressions of a unique, absolute first principle. Thus Kant's revolutionary idea that the *a priori* conditions of human knowledge constitute the *a priori* conditions of the objects of human knowledge, has to compete with Spinoza's idea of the distinct attributes of intellect and extension, which exhibit parallelisms and isomorphisms because they are expressions of one and the same divine substance.

We are now in a good position to understand the thinking of Fichte and Schelling in the mid-1790s. Both assume that any adequate philosophical system must combine Derivation Monism with Holistic Monism.⁹³ Both also distinguish the version of transcendental idealism they espouse from Spinozism, which they take to be a version of transcendental realism. The structure of the optimal transcendental realism, they think, is the same as the structure of the optimal transcendental idealism. However, the former takes the absolute not-I as its first principle, while the latter takes the

93. Thus, for example, Schelling (1856–1861), I/1, VIPP: 238n. criticizes Reinhold for not meeting the standard of systematicity because of the relationship between his account of freedom and the first principle of his system: "It would be hard, even for as keen an author as he is, to give unity to his system, and adequately to connect it with the theory of freedom, by means of the highest principle (which should not only form its basis but also rule in every one of its parts). A completed science shuns all philosophical artifices by which the I itself, so to speak, is taken apart and split into faculties which are not thinkable under any common principle of unity. The completed science does not aim at dead faculties that have no reality and exist only in artificial abstractions. It aims rather at the living unity of the I, which is the same in all manifestations of its action." Hegel makes essentially the same point about the requirement of systematicity in sections 14–15 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, in Hegel (1970), 8, EL: 59–60: "[section 14:] Free and genuine thought is inwardly concrete; hence it is *Idea*, and in all its universality it is the *Idea* or the Absolute. The science of it is essentially a *system*, since what is *concretely* true is so only in its inward self-unfolding and in taking and holding itself together in unity, i.e., as *totality* [section 15:] Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself; but in each of them the philosophical *Idea* is in a particular determinacy or element. Every single circle also breaks through the restriction of its element as well, precisely because it is inwardly totality, and it grounds a further sphere. The whole presents itself therefore as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its peculiar elements constitutes the whole *Idea*—which equally appears in each single one of them."

absolute I as its first principle. At this stage, however, it is unclear to them whether they are developing transcendental idealism in accordance with Kant's *actual* intentions or whether they are developing it in accordance with the intentions he *should* have had. In 1799, Kant's repudiation compels them to adopt the latter view, but this hardly shakes their philosophical convictions, which had never been based on an interpretive claim.

Not long after, in 1800–1801, the schism between Fichte and Schelling about the status of the philosophy of nature may be regarded as a dispute about the condition under which a system committed to both Derivation Monism and Holistic Monism counts as idealist. Fichte continues to hold that such a system is idealist only if the absolute I, as constituted in moral autonomy, is its *starting point*. Schelling, who has an ally in Hegel by 1801, now thinks that such a system is idealist if it *culminates* in the absolute I.⁹⁴ Thus the development of what Schelling and Hegel call absolute idealism or the identity philosophy—in which the *a priori* conditions of knowledge are to be demonstrated as identical with the *a priori* conditions of being—represents a reconstrual of Kant's Copernican revolution via Spinozism.

We are also in a position to understand, in at least an initial way, what is truly at stake in the German idealist criticism of Kant's doctrine of things in themselves.

A familiar misunderstanding is expressed in, for example, Bertrand Russell's statement that "Kant's immediate successor, Fichte, abandoned 'things in themselves' and carried subjectivism to a point which seems almost to involve a kind of insanity."⁹⁵ Here German idealism is seen as the culmination of a disastrous trend towards subjectivism. First, Descartes encloses the mind within itself, as its own inner world, leaving objects in an external world that can be known only with divine assistance; then Kant insists that these external objects are in principle unknowable, although he also maintains that they exist; finally, Fichte argues that they cannot be said to exist at all. This story assumes that things in themselves are objects *empirically external* to the *individual* mind, so that Fichte becomes a solipsist. In fact, however, the in itself is the transcendently real domain, structured by ground-consequence relations that terminate in an absolute or all-sufficient ground, which must exist on the supposition of an intelligible world, or

94. See Chapter 6 and Beiser (2002), 469–560.

95. Russell (1945), 718. See also Heidegger (1985), 187–188. I discuss this statement further in Chapter 6.

on the supposition of an escape from the Agrippan trilemma. What is at stake in German idealist rejections of Kant's doctrine of things in themselves is whether this transcendently real domain is to be conceived in accordance with Monadic Individualism, as Kant thinks, modifying Leibniz, or in accordance with Holistic Monism, as the German idealists think, modifying Spinoza.

When they reject Kant's Two Essences view, the German idealists adopt what is in effect a Two Aspects view: the empirical aspect of a thing corresponds to the way in which a thing's being as it is, is grounded in its relations to other things within the totality; the transcendental aspect of a thing corresponds to the way in which a thing's being as it is, is grounded in its relation to the totality and ultimately to the totality's absolute first principle. On this view, there is one world, understandable in two ways, or from two standpoints.

Two Aspects views appeal to many contemporary Kantians and post-Kantians because they seem to avoid the supernaturalism of Two Worlds views, including the Two Existents and Two Essences views. But we should not assume that the fact that German idealists develop Two Aspects views make their systems compatible with contemporary naturalism. The same question arises about German idealist systems as about Spinoza: do they naturalize metaphysics and theology, or do they supernaturalize nature?⁹⁶

96. Donagan (1991). For further discussion, see the Conclusion of the present volume.

Post-Kantian Skepticism

Skepticism is beginning to become a sickness of the age, and—which is a rare phenomenon in history—is beginning to spread itself among more classes and to express its effects on a large scale. The most recent revolution in philosophy was supposed to overthrow it, but according to a new discovery it is supposed to have bent not a hair on its head or, rather, even to have strengthened it.

—Stäudlin (1784), 2

Critical and skeptical philosophy stand in exactly the same relationship as man and the serpent after the fall, as it says: "He (man) will tread upon your head (that is, the critical philosopher will always disturb the skeptical philosopher with the necessity and universality of principles required for scientific cognition); but you (serpent) will bite him on the heel (that is, the skeptic will always tease the critical philosopher with the fact that his necessary and universally valid principles have no use)." *Quid facti?*

—Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 80, based on Genesis 3:15

3.1

It has become a commonplace in recent work that German idealism is a response to skepticism expressed in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy. Although this thesis contains an important kernel of truth, it needs to be qualified.

First, as I have argued in Chapters 1 and 2, the German idealist project of systematization should be seen, in large part, as a response to the same problematic that motivates Kant's critical philosophy: a complex problematic composed of Agrippan, Leibnizian, and Newtonian/Humean layers. For one effect of the Spinozism controversy initiated by Jacobi is to give the German idealists reason to believe that the best response to this problematic would be a system committed to both Derivation and Holistic Monism. This explains why the German idealists could be satisfied only by a

system that aspires to grasp "*das All*," or the real as a totality. But it does so in terms of a skeptical problematic that is not especially post-Kantian.¹

Second, as I will argue in this chapter, the other major effect of the Spinozism controversy is to transform this problematic in what comes to be a distinctively post-Kantian way. This transformation, which gives rise to genuinely post-Kantian skepticisms, explains why, for the German idealists, what is at stake in the systematization of Kant's philosophy is all or nothing.

In what follows, I will first characterize Kant's attitude towards skepticism, arguing that, in spite of his own intentions, the logic of his position leaves open the possibility of at least two species of distinctively post-Kantian skepticism. I will then show that, thanks to Jacobi and Maimon, these possibilities were actualized within the 1780s and 1790s. I will also consider to what extent the resulting skepticisms depend, either on inadequate interpretations of Kantian dualism or on a Holistic Monism that Kant does not share.

In the previous chapter, I was concerned with the German idealist transformation of the transcendental pole of Kantian dualism; in this chapter, I focus on the German idealist reconceptualization of the empirical. As we shall see, the first kind of post-Kantian skepticism to be considered leads the German idealists to view skepticism as a threat not only to academic philosophy, as it is from Kant's perspective, but also to everyday life. The second kind of post-Kantian skepticism leads to a prioritization of the non-mathematical natural sciences, such as biology and chemistry, over the mathematical natural sciences. This prioritization is the reverse of Kant's and is distinctive of the *Naturphilosophie* central to the systems of Schelling and Hegel.

1. In what follows, I will speak of "post-Kantian skepticism." I do not mean to imply that Jacobi, or any post-Kantian, *advocates* such a skepticism—although Maimon, whom I shall discuss below, comes closest, insofar as he does not think transcendental philosophy will ever overcome skepticism. Rather, the point is that some critics of Kant may criticize transcendental idealism because they find that it amounts to some new kind(s) of skepticism enabled by Kant's revolution, whereas some post-Kantians may find that their acceptance of Kant's revolution makes some new kind(s) of skepticism a source of anxiety for them. There is an intimate connection between what I call "post-Kantian skepticism" and what James Conant, in his forthcoming work, calls "Kantian skepticism." The affinities and differences between us deserve discussion elsewhere.

3.2

Some philosophers today regard skepticism as a problem that is, or ought to be, *superseded*—an issue of the past, to which we should not bother responding.² Yet it would be no exaggeration to say that others regard skepticism as in some way *defining* philosophy's contemporary task.³

A similar division is found among interpreters of Kant. Some think that Kant is not concerned to argue against skepticism, since he believes that nobody could be a serious skeptic in the face of Newton's accomplishments. Yet others measure Kant's accomplishments by his success or failure in replying to the skepticism of Hume.⁴

I will argue that Kant holds *both* of the attitudes mentioned above. That is, Kant thinks *both* that skepticism defines the task of philosophy *and* that skepticism is, or ought to be, a problem of the past. To understand Kant's view of skepticism, we must see how he *could* hold these two—apparently opposed—attitudes.

2. Three ways of dismissing skepticism stand out as influential over the last few decades. What is striking is that views that are so very different should have conspired to produce a common effect. According to Quine, classical epistemology has been largely concerned with the justification of knowledge against skepticism. But that project has failed. See Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized" in Quine (1969), 72: "The Humean predicament is the human predicament." So classical epistemology should give way to a naturalized successor-discipline without justificatory pretensions. According to Rorty (1979), 140: "The Cartesian mind simultaneously made possible veil-of-ideas skepticism and a discipline devoted to circumventing it." Since, then, we can dispense with the Cartesian theory of the mind, we can also dispense both with (modern) skepticism and with the epistemological discipline concerned to refute it. According to Chisholm, however, Quine and Rorty share a false presupposition: classical epistemology has never been solely or necessarily concerned to refute skepticism. Pure, theoretical analysis of the structure of justification is logically independent of any interest in skeptical doubt, which is in any event of doubtful coherence. So classical epistemology should continue but without the interest in skepticism that has motivated some of its practitioners. See Chisholm (1966), 24–27.

3. See Williams (1996), xii–46, for discussion of what he calls the New Skepticism or New Humeanism of, for example, Stanley Cavell, Thomas Nagel, and Barry Stroud, who hold, in their different ways, that skepticism is deeply rooted in the very activity of philosophizing and so must be confronted in any self-reflective philosophy. Some who rhetorically dismiss skepticism may nevertheless reinforce the sense of its standing importance. For example, Quine's remark about Hume, cited in the previous footnote, may be taken that way.

4. The prevailing view in recent—especially but not exclusively Anglophone—literature, has been that Kant's achievements must be measured against his ability to refute skepticism. See, for example, Wolff (1963), ch. 1; Walker (1978), vii; Henrich (1989), 37; Stroud (1983). For an approach that focuses on Kant's relation to Newton, see Friedman (1992a), and for a careful examination of Kant's attitude to skepticism, see Engstrom (1994) and Hatfield (2001).

Few passages are more frequently cited in accounts of Kant's motivation than the passage from the *Prolegomena* in which he says that his recollection of Hume first interrupted his dogmatic slumber.⁵ Here, however, two points need to be noted. First, as Kant's initial expressions of Humean skepticism show, Hume's reflections on causality strike him as bringing out a problem related to the problematic within which he is already working, a problematic characterized by the need to respond to the Agrippan trilemma and, more specifically, to preserve the difference between a physics susceptible to the trilemma and a metaphysics designed to escape it, while grounding the former in the latter. Reading Hume convinces Kant that there is no hope whatsoever of showing that instantiations of what he calls real ground-consequence relations—governed by the hypothetically necessary laws of Newtonian physics—are derivable, even in principle, from instantiations of what he calls logical ground-consequence relations—governed by the absolutely necessary laws of Kant's quasi-Leibnizian metaphysics.⁶ This means that Kant's project of synthesizing Leibniz and Newton cannot succeed. It also raises a skeptical problem about real ground-consequence relations. But this is not a problem that depends on any assumption about whether empirically external objects are immediately given through the senses, or whether ideas alone are immediately given. Nor does it depend on any assumptions specific to Hume about the origins of knowledge, such as the thesis that every idea is a copy of some impression. As it strikes Kant, Humean skepticism adds a layer to a problematic that is Agrippan, not—to use an overly simplistic term—Cartesian.⁷

5. Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 260.

6. See Chapter 1.

7. "Cartesian skepticism" is conventionally taken in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy to be a form of skepticism in which knowledge-claims about what is within the mind—for example, about what I am thinking now—are taken to be unproblematic, whereas knowledge-claims about what is without the mind—for example, about my body or any object spatially distinct from my body—are taken to be problematic. In addition, the problem facing claims of the second kind is taken to be that, although we have reasons for making these claims, reasons are also available for making—or at least taking seriously—incompatible claims. So there is supposed to be a gap between the reasons we ordinarily find compelling and the truth of the claims we make on their basis. The skeptical considerations adduced by Descartes in the first Meditation may be characterized in this way, and I say accordingly that Kant's concern with Hume is not a concern with "Cartesian skepticism" in this sense. However, in his second Meditation, Descartes himself develops a different sort of skeptical consideration that anticipates Hume and Kant. He argues, to put it in Kantian terms, that the category of substance is not empirical, because no sensory perception or

Second, it is important to note that Kant never says that he was provoked into attempting a *refutation* of Hume's *skepticism*. Rather, the description of their relationship suggested by the passage is that Hume helped Kant to *ask* the central *question* of transcendental philosophy. To inaugurate transcendental philosophy, Kant needed first to *generalize* Hume's skeptical question and then to ask that question in a different *tone* or *mood*. Whereas Hume may be said to have asked, "How *could* we *possibly* be justified in employing the concept of cause?" Kant found a way to ask, "Under what conditions *can* we employ the concept of cause?" or, more generally, "How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?"⁸ Skepticism, Kant says later in the *Prolegomena*, is "a way of thinking, in which reason moves against itself with such violence, that it could never have arisen except in complete despair [*in völliger Verzweiflung*] of achieving satisfaction with respect to reason's most important aspirations."⁹ Hume's skeptical question is asked in a mood of *despair*, whereas Kant's transcendental question is asked in a mood of what Kant elsewhere calls *hope*: hope that reason can fulfill its aspiration to self-knowledge.¹⁰

This is how skepticism defines the task of philosophy for Kant. It is not that philosophy must seek, above all, to refute skepticism. Rather, philos-

series of sensory perceptions could legitimately give rise to it. From this, Descartes concludes that the category must be innate. On the way to this conclusion, however, he cannot help but raise the question of whether there might be a gap—not, this time, between justification and truth, but rather—between the reasons we give for our claims and those claims themselves. In Hume's hands, this becomes a skeptical doubt, not about whether something external is given to us through the senses, but rather about what we may justifiably claim about this something. Hume himself is self-conscious about the affinities between the skepticism with which he is concerned and ancient skepticism.

8. Compare Lear (1998), 285–286: "A transcendental argument for X . . . will answer the question 'How is X possible?' when that question is asked with a straight face rather than a skeptical sneer." For Lear, too, the mood in which the question is asked is crucial. But must a skeptical question be accompanied by a sneer rather than, say, a wild-eyed look of horror, or a disillusioned shrug of the shoulder?

9. Kant (1900–), *Prolog* 4: 271.

10. See also Kant (1900–), *KrV*, A407/B433–434, where Kant refers to "skeptical hopelessness [*Hoffnungslosigkeit*]." The notion of rational hope plays a crucial role in Kant's doctrine of the highest good. On reason's aspiration to self-knowledge, see A745/B773, where Kant imagines Hume answering a question about the purpose of skepticism by saying that we have been made vulnerable to skepticism "solely in order to advance reason in its self-knowledge, and because of a certain indignation at the violence that is done to reason by those who, while boasting of its powers, yet hinder it from candid admission of the weaknesses which have become obvious to it through its own self-examination."

ophy must learn from skepticism which questions to ask, while transmuting the skeptic's mood of despair. Thus, transcendental philosophy may be described, not only as an account of the conditions of the possibility of synthetic judgments *a priori*, but also as an account of the conditions of the possibility of skepticism. For the list of synthetic judgments *a priori* is at the same time a list of judgments that are vulnerable to skeptical doubt. There is a genuine problem about these judgments, a problem articulated—at least, in part—by Hume. For we can easily grasp that the ground of synthetic judgments *a posteriori* is experience, and we can readily see that the ground of analytic judgments is the general logic of our concepts, but we cannot understand the ground of synthetic judgments *a priori* unless we alter the direction of our gaze. As Kant says in several passages, Hume gave up too hastily and was thus driven to skeptical despair.¹¹ He missed the possibility that some judgments might be neither enabled by experience nor independent of experience but, rather, conditions for the possibility of experience.

What sustains Kant in his hopefulness is precisely his generalization of Hume's problem. For once Kant has arrived at the general idea of synthetic judgments *a priori*, he sees that the problem arises as much for mathematics and—for what he calls the general science of nature, as it does for causal judgments. But mathematics and mathematical physics are, for Kant, beyond reasonable doubt, and he is confident that Hume would have said the same if he had realized that his problem extended to them. If Hume's problem is soluble in the cases of mathematics and mathematical physics, then we have reason to hope that it is soluble more generally. Any view that gives up the quest for a general solution, abandoning itself to despair, is—as Kant says of empiricism in the introduction to the Transcendental Deduction—"refuted" [*widerlegt*] through the *Factum* of mathematical and natural science.¹²

11. Kant (1900–), ProI, 4: 258; KrV, A762–763/B790–791.

12. Kant (1900–), KrV, B128. See also B4–5, where Kant claims that it is easy to show that there are pure *a priori* judgments in human knowledge, whether scientific or ordinary, and that, even without appealing to such examples, it is possible to show that pure *a priori* principles are indispensable for the possibility of experience, which could not derive its "certainty" from anywhere else. At any rate, Kant says, "we can content ourselves with having displayed the pure use of our cognition as a fact [*Tatsache*] together with its indication [*Kennzeichen*]." Evidently, no refutation of skepticism is required to establish this fact. I say more about the relevant notion of *Factum* or *Tatsache* in Chapters 4 and 5.

So skepticism defines philosophy's task by teaching it to ask transcendental questions. But skepticism is *also* a problem of the past. Once the mood has changed from despair to hope, no further refutation of skepticism is called for, and Kant's central arguments do not seek to provide one. This attitude goes along with a certain picture of the skeptic's motivation. Skeptics like Hume, Kant thinks, are driven by reason's interest in self-knowledge. When they find reason's way to its objective apparently blocked, they prefer candid admission of their despair to disingenuous pretense that all is well. Consequently, skepticism is—at least, so far—an *academic* problem, a problem that affects those who want to fulfill reason's aspirations by setting metaphysics on the sure path of a science.¹³ Moreover, there should be no room for skepticism proper—that is, for skeptical despair—after Kant's inauguration of transcendental philosophy. At most, there is room for the deployment of skeptical arguments against philosophy's recurring seduction into transcendent dogmatism by dialectical illusions.¹⁴ For Kant recognizes no drive to skeptical doubt *as such*. There is only the drive to *knowledge*, which used to get diverted into skepticism, prior to Kant's critical restoration of hope.

3.3

If Kant is successful, then, there ought to be no skepticism after Kant. But of course there is. And some varieties presuppose precisely that Kant's arguments have succeeded.

One frequently mentioned possibility is that transcendental idealism, the *conclusion* that should be established by Kant's arguments if they are successful, simply amounts to skepticism. In the next section, I will say more about this possibility, which Kant would certainly want to resist.

In addition, the *argument* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself leaves open at least the *logical* possibility of post-Kantian skepticism.¹⁵ First, recall

13. See Kant (1900–), KrV, Bxxxiv–xxxv: “Through criticism alone can we never sever the very root of *materialism, fatalism, atheism, of free-thinking unbelief, of enthusiasm, and superstition*, which can become generally injurious, and finally also of *idealism and skepticism*, which are more dangerous to the schools and can hardly be transmitted to the public.” Any attempt to restrain academic freedom in order to protect the public is therefore misguided, argues Kant.

14. See Kant (1900–), KrV, A297–298/B354–355.

15. This is in no way intended as an exhaustive list. And I do not intend here to reconstruct the details of Kant's arguments. I will merely assume standard characterizations of those arguments and, for the sake of this investigation, I will assume the validity—but not the soundness—of the arguments, so characterized.

Kant's description of his deductive method in "The Discipline of Pure Reason":

Through concepts of the understanding . . . [pure reason] certainly erects secure principles, but not directly from concepts, but rather always only indirectly through relation of these concepts to something entirely contingent, namely, *possible experience*; since if this (something as object of possible experiences) is presupposed, then they are of course apodictically certain, but in themselves they cannot even be cognized *a priori* (directly) at all . . . although [the proposition that everything that happens has its cause] must be *proved*, it is called a *principle*, not a *theorem* because it has the special property that it first makes possible its ground of proof, namely experience, and must always be presupposed in this.¹⁶

This is, I think, generally understood as follows: Kant undertakes to show that synthetic *a priori* principles—such as the principle of causality—are necessary conditions for the admittedly contingent possibility of experience; since, as a matter of fact, we actually have experience, it follows that the application of the principles is justified.

If this interpretation is correct, then the assumption that we actually have experience plays a crucial role in transcendental argumentation.¹⁷ Were there reason to *doubt* that we actually have experience, the principles in question would not have been demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt, *even if* Kant's argument that they are conditions for the possibility of experience were accepted as logically *valid*. Consequently, it is logically possible to accept the argumentation of the Analytic in Kant's first *Critique*, and yet to doubt the actuality of experience that Kant assumes. In this way, it is possible to be a post-Kantian skeptic.¹⁸ Moreover, if there were reason

16. Kant (1900–), KrV, A737/B765.

17. Although this is not the place to explore the point, I think it likely that when Kant refers to "something as object of possible experience," he has in mind the sum-total of the *materials* for possible experience, a finite spatio-temporal version of the *ens realissimum*. Kant's method could presuppose the actuality of this material sum-total, without presupposing the actuality of experience itself. On the *ens realissimum*, see Chapter 1; Wood (1978), 55–59; Longuenesse (1995), 521–537. On the role of a finite analogue of the *ens realissimum* in Kant's transition project, see Friedman (1992a), 308–311; Förster (2000).

18. It may seem that Kant excludes this possibility in advance, when he adds the Refutation of Idealism to the B-edition of the first *Critique*. For this is supposed to show, according to B275, that we have *experience*, not merely imagination, of outer things. However, Kant is concerned here with a "Cartesian skepticism" arising from what he calls Descartes' "problematic idealism": the view that I have immediate, inner experience of my own existence, but only mediated, inferential beliefs about outer objects. Rejection of problematic idealism is already implicit in the argument of the A-edition, but is left implicit precisely because Kant is not primarily concerned with the

to doubt that experience is so much as *possible*—say, because of a conflict between two conditions necessary for its possibility—then this would give rise to a still more radical version of post-Kantian skepticism.

Remarkably, as I hope to show, all these possibilities for post-Kantian skepticism come to be actualized in the period of Kant's first reception, in the 1780s and 1790s. During that seminal period, it is not unusual for a philosopher who considers himself a Kantian to think that, far from superseding skepticism, Kant has shown how deep a problem it really is, or even that Kant has given rise to a more thoroughgoing skepticism than any hitherto encountered.

3.4

I want first to consider the thesis that transcendental idealism, even if successfully established, amounts to some kind of skepticism. The problem with this thesis is that, as it is typically formulated, it seems to depend on a misinterpretation of Kantian dualism that renders Kant, in effect, *pre-Kantian*, depriving him of all originality.¹⁹ Consequently, it is tempting to dismiss the claim that transcendental idealism amounts to skepticism. If the German idealists are responding to a skepticism based on a misinterpretation of Kant, then their response is, if not doomed, then at least tainted, and difficult to justify against Kantianism. However, I will argue that there are genuinely post-Kantian ways of reformulating the claim, so that it does not depend on a misunderstanding of Kant.

The *locus classicus* for the idea that Kant's revolution, if successful, leads to a new kind of skepticism is a supplement to Jacobi's 1787 book of dialogues inspired by Hume.²⁰ This supplement, with its complaint of a

sort of skepticism it motivates. In any event, the Refutation is not concerned with the post-Kantian skepticism that questions whether we have experience *at all*. Incidentally, it should also be noted that Kant correctly claims to refute idealism, not to refute skepticism, even of the kind motivated by problematic idealism. For, as he himself points out at A791–792/B819–820, no *reductio ad absurdum* of a thesis can show its antithesis to be true, as long it remains possible that the antithesis might also be reducible *ad absurdum*. Kant has not excluded the possibility that empirical realism is in some way absurd, and hence that we are in the skeptical position of having no compelling reason to choose either empirical realism or empirical idealism.

19. Certainly, the Garve-Feder review, which shared the interpretation in question, attributing to Kant the Cartesian view of the mind as an inner realm of mental objects or states, concluded that Kant had contributed nothing new. For a reprint of the review, originally published in *Zugabe zu den Göttingischen Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* (19 January, 1782), 40–48, see Landau (1991), 10–17. For a translation, see Sassen (2000).

20. See Jacobi (1983), DHÜG, 209–230.

presupposition without which one cannot enter the critical philosophy but with which one cannot remain within it, is as famous as any reaction to Kant. Yet it is all too often read in total isolation from Jacobi's other writings, in isolation even from the text to which it is a supplement. The result is widespread misunderstanding, not only of Jacobi's own position, but also, as I hope to show, of the ultimate import of his criticism of Kant.

In the supplement on transcendental idealism, Jacobi argues that Kant is torn between two incompatible commitments. On the one hand, Kant is committed to the genuine receptivity of outer sense. Indeed, Kant's talk of sensibility would be meaningless unless he intended "a distinct real intermediary between one real thing and another, an actual means *from something to something else*," hence unless he presupposed "the objective validity of our perception of objects outside us as things in themselves."²¹ Without that presupposition, Jacobi had found for some time that he could not enter into the Kantian system. For without it he could make no sense of the distinction between sensibility and understanding.

On the other hand, Kant is committed to the transcendental idealist doctrine that we know only appearances. As Jacobi puts it, "what we realists call actual objects or things independent of our representations are for the transcendental idealist only internal beings *which exhibit nothing at all of a thing that may perhaps be there outside us, or to which the appearance may refer. Rather, these internal beings are merely subjective determinations of the mind, entirely void of anything truly objective.*"²² So Jacobi cannot stay within the Kantian system as long as he continues to credit Kant's presupposition of a genuine faculty of outer sense.

It is simply impossible, Jacobi argues, for Kant to maintain both his realistic commitment to genuine sensibility and his idealism. So Kant faces a dilemma. He must give up one or the other if he is to be consistent. Now, Jacobi is himself a thoroughgoing realist, as he has stated clearly in the main body of the text.²³ So it goes without saying in the supplement that Jacobi himself would recommend realism to Kant. What Jacobi emphasizes in the supplement, for his own dialectical purposes, is the consequence of

21. Jacobi (1983), DHuG, 223. For a later version of the point, made in 1815 when Jacobi had clarified his position and was able to refer to Kant's later works, see Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 21–24.

22. Jacobi, (1983), DHuG, 217. For a later version, see Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 34–38.

23. See, for example, Jacobi (1983), DHuG, 59–65, where it is argued that the realist must reject the assumption that representations, as determinations of the self, are epistemically prior to knowledge of outer objects, which requires inference.

rejecting realism to become a consistent transcendental idealist. Someone who grasped that horn of the dilemma would have to profess what Jacobi calls "transcendental ignorance," a thoroughgoing repudiation of knowledge about even the probability of the existence of things outside us in a transcendental sense.²⁴ This "absolute and unqualified ignorance" would be accompanied by "the strongest idealism that was ever professed," since all that could ever be known would be merely subjective and internal. If one wants to be a consistent transcendental idealist, one "should not be afraid of the objection of speculative egoism."²⁵ Of course, Jacobi means to be presenting the Kantian with a *reductio ad absurdum*. Yet, presumably because his words have been taken out of the context of his realism and, indeed, out of the context of the book in which those words appear, he is often quoted as if he is recommending "speculative egoism."²⁶

Jacobi's criticism of the inconsistency of Kant's transcendental idealism, and his argument that a consistent Kantian idealism would amount not only to skeptical doubt, but to *denial of the very possibility of knowledge of external objects*, was immensely influential in his own day and is still echoed today.²⁷ However, it is not hard to see that Jacobi is interpreting Kant against Kant's explicit protests, as an idealist akin to Berkeley. Of course, Jacobi is hardly alone. Kant is similarly interpreted, not only in the Garve-Feder review that so provoked Kant, but also in much twentieth-century Anglophone literature.²⁸ Admittedly, Jacobi wrote his supplement before

24. Jacobi (1983), DHuG, 229.

25. Jacobi (1983), DHuG, 229.

26. For a recent example, see Collins (1999), 27 (emphasis mine): "Kant does not actually assert any idealist conclusion, which he would do only if he contended that there are no things-in-themselves but only ideas that seem to be ideas of such things, or if he argued that we cannot know for sure whether there any things-in-themselves in addition to our ideas of such things. These views would amount to a dogmatic or a problematic idealism concerning things-in-themselves. *Jacobi seems to adopt the latter position*, but Kant himself propounds neither. It is in the context of these understandings that German idealism turns away from Kant's commitment to things-in-themselves."

27. Jacobi may have influenced Schulze (1996), originally published anonymously in 1792, which echoes and develops some of Jacobi's criticisms of Kant, and which throughout neglects the transcendental/empirical distinction and presupposes a Cartesian Kant interpretation. See Chapter 4. Fichte seems to accept Jacobi's view of those he called Kantians, who read Kant literally, but not of Kant himself, as read spiritually. For recent echoes of Jacobi, see Stroud (1984) and Williams (1996), 20.

28. See Collins (1999), 153–182, for discussion of the persistence of the Cartesian interpretation, not only in Paton, Kemp Smith, and Strawson, who might acknowledge it, but also in Allison and Pippin, who mean to be offering non-Cartesian interpretations. For a defense of the

Kant produced the B-edition of the first *Critique*. But Kant had already published the *Prolegomena*, and his clarifications there and in the B-edition did not lead Jacobi, or many more recent Anglophone commentators, to retract the ascription to Kant of a Cartesian conception of the mind as veiled from the external world by its own representations.

That ascription has recently been challenged, with great thoroughness and effectiveness, notably by Arthur Collins, who provides alternative ways of reading even the A-edition passages that have seemed Cartesian to Jacobi and to many others. Jacobi finds these passages so obviously Cartesian that it is sufficient merely to *quote* them in order to bring out the side of Kant that is incompatible with realism about external objects. For example, at A491/B519, Kant characterizes transcendental idealism as follows: "everything intuited in space or time, and hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself." And at A101, Kant says: "Appearances are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations, which in the end come down to determinations of inner sense."²⁹

No doubt these passages *sound* Cartesian. Indeed, as Collins notes, at A368 Kant uses almost identical language to describe the Cartesian or problematic idealist, for whom, "it always remains doubtful . . . whether . . . all the so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense, or whether they stand in relation to actual external objects as their cause." Yet it is in that very context, in the Fourth Paralogism, that Kant explicitly distinguishes his *transcendental* idealism from the *empirical* idealism of the Cartesian. Apparently, this distinction is insufficient to prevent Jacobi from drawing some of his most compelling proof-texts from the Fourth Paralogism itself. Indeed, although Kant protests vehemently against the suggestion that he is an empirical idealist, and although he drops some of the apparently damning language (e.g., A101), he does not drop all of it (e.g., A491/B519). He even reuses some of it in the *Prolegomena*, although that

once dominant phenomenalist interpretation, see Van Cleve (1999), and for illuminating criticism, see Ameriks (2003b).

29. Cited by Jacobi (1983), DHüG, 216–217. Kemp Smith makes clear his Cartesian interpretation of the passage by translating "auf Bestimmungen des inneren Sinnes auslaufen" as "reduce to determinations of inner sense." Jacobi also cites extracts from the Fourth Paralogism (A367–380), the Aesthetic (A36), and the A-deduction (A125–126).

text is meant to refute the charge of empirical idealism.³⁰ If there is no way to interpret these passages other than the obvious Cartesian way, then Kant is a very confused man.

But there is another way. What is at stake, once again, is the interpretation of Kantian dualism.³¹ The Cartesian interpretation of transcendental idealism is similar to, but distinct from, Maimon's misinterpretation of Kantian dualism discussed in Chapter 1. Maimon misunderstands the character of the *distinction* to which Kantian dualism commits Kant: he thinks it is a real distinction, like the real distinction between mind and body for which Descartes argues. Jacobi misunderstands the *terms* between which Kantian dualism distinguishes: he thinks it is a distinction between the inner space of the mind and the outer space of the world of objects, like the distinction to which Descartes is committed.

We need, then, to take seriously Kant's distinction between the transcendental and the empirical. Most urgently in this context, we need to take seriously Kant's own remark in the Fourth Paralogism that the expression "outside us" is "unavoidably ambiguous," having both an empirical and a transcendental sense.³² Indeed, we need to generalize this remark, so that a range of terms, including "inside us" and "representation," are also treated as having both empirical and transcendental senses. Without attempting a full exploration of the range of ambiguous terms in Kant's work, it will suffice here to say something about the difference between

30. See, for example, Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 337: "The question of whether bodies (as appearances of outer sense) exist *outside my thought* as bodies in nature can without hesitation be answered negatively." For discussion, see Collins (1999), 33.

31. Collins does not provide an account of Kantian dualism as I have done in Chapter 1, but he provides invaluable help by providing transcendental readings of passages that one is sorely tempted to read empirically. His transcendental readings are generally compatible with my view of Kantian dualism. However, Collins seems uninterested in asking why Kant writes this way. Indeed, he leaves the impression that Kant just committed an inexplicable tactical error. Collins himself prefers to stick to the empirical sense of idealism and hence to insist that Kant was simply *not* an idealist. See, for example, Collins (1999), 2: "Kant is not an idealist, and 'transcendental idealism' is a misleading title in so far as it seems to advertise a thesis that merely corrects the errors of the defective versions of idealism Kant expressly refutes." To my mind, this leaves unexplained the intimacy of the relationship between empirical and transcendental idealism, symbolized by the possibility of expressing them in the same language. If we are to understand Kant's vulnerability to misunderstanding, we must explore the engagement with skepticism that leads him both to distinguish the empirical from the transcendental and to formulate his own response to skepticism in exactly the terms previously used by the empirical idealist, as if to express the truth in the empirical idealist's unacceptable position.

32. Kant (1900–), KrV, A368.

the empirical and transcendental senses of the claim that, say, all objects of experience are mere representations.

Empirically speaking, to say that all objects of experience are mere representations is to make an ontological claim. It is to say that all objects of experience are mental, whether they are mental objects or mental states. Whatever is mental cannot exist outside thought because thought is the essence or medium of the mental. According to some highly influential lines of thought, whatever is mental may exist independently of any non-mental thing and may be individuated solely in terms either of its own intrinsic properties or of the intrinsic properties of the mind of which it is a state.

If, however, one says that all objects of experience are representations in the *transcendental* sense, no such ontological claim is being made, either about the mental status of empirical objects or about their independence from the nonmental. Rather, the claim in its transcendental sense is like the claim that an object has a certain property when viewed from a certain perspective.³³ If I say that a bridge, viewed from my window, is obscured by an intervening building, I am not saying that the bridge *in itself* has the property of being obscured. Being obscured is not an intrinsic property of the bridge. Nor is it a property that could be explained in terms of the bridge's intrinsic properties, whatever they may be. Being obscured is extrinsic or relational.³⁴ It follows that being obscured is also not an intrinsic property of my mind. It is, rather, a *perspectival* property, a relational property of a specific kind, which cannot exist without the perspective in question, and which therefore could not exist if there were no minds capable of occupying that perspective. Now, the fact that a perspectival property cannot exist "outside my thoughts" in the sense just explained does not

33. See Collins (1999), 37–45, from whom the bridge example is drawn. The analogy between transcendental idealism and ordinary perspectival claims helps to explain Kant's famous invocation of Copernicus. For Copernicus's revolution depends upon the insight that observations may have unobserved conditions, hence that it may be harder than we realize to distinguish apparent from real motions, which is not to say that apparent motions are mental. See Ewing (1950), 16.

34. See Chapter 1 on the interpretation of a thing in itself as an *ens per se*, a thing that is what it is in virtue of its intrinsic properties. I argued that there is a dimension of Kant's conception of a thing in itself that preserves this traditional metaphysical view, although there is also more to Kant's conception than that. For present purposes, the important point is that—as Kant argues on the basis of his Newtonian view of space, time, and causality—one can show that something is perceived as an appearance, not as a thing in itself, if one can show that it is perceived through irreducibly relational properties.

entail that the property is mental, let alone that it may exist or be individuated independently of any nonmental thing.

Of course, Kant's transcendental claim is not *exactly* like ordinary perspectival claims. Ordinarily, we have access to a *variety* of perspectives. If I view the bridge from elsewhere, it is not obscured. But Kant's argument is that all human beings occupy the same *transcendental* perspective—that there are conditions of our experience to which *all* empirical properties are relative—and that no *alternative* perspective in that sense is available to us. *None* of the empirical properties we ascribe to things are intrinsic properties of those things, or properties of things *in themselves*. For *every* possible empirical property is given to us humans in space and/or time, so that—as we have seen in Chapter 1—it does not so much as co-vary with any intrinsic property. Still, the analogy remains: Kant's transcendental claim does not entail that all empirical properties are mental, let alone that they are intrinsic properties of mind, independent of the nonmental. So the perspectival character of transcendental idealism is very different from the ontological character of empirical idealism.

Now, if Jacobi's influential claim, that consistent transcendental idealism entails "absolute and unqualified ignorance" of external things, depends on the mistaken ascription to Kant of *empirical* idealism, then the claim must surely be rejected. According to Kant's transcendental idealism, we *can* know external things, but we cannot know them as they are in themselves. For there is a perfectly legitimate, empirical sense in which the objects known to us by means of the senses are outside us. It is knowledge *understood in a specific way* that is denied to us, but this denial seems very different from skeptical doubts or denials with respect to knowledge *as such*, especially since the knowledge denied to us is not, Kant argues, a kind to which we lay claim within the discourse of experience. So it seems that Jacobi has not led us to a species of post-Kantian skepticism.

Moreover, if the German idealists misinterpret Kant's transcendental idealism as empirical idealism, and then respond to a skepticism they take to follow from Kant's conclusion, then their project is tainted. For even if they give an interesting response to empirical idealism, they will have missed Kant's fundamental contribution to the question of skepticism. Indeed, if one thinks of the German idealists as responding to skepticism by rejecting the notion of things in themselves *in the empirical sense*, then one will take them to be extreme subjectivists whose response to skepticism is interesting only to the extent that it is interesting to see how far intelligent people may be led into absurdity.

Collins seems to think that the German idealists just are empirical idealists and that their view arises, at least in part, from the misinterpretation of Kant that he refutes.³⁵ Ameriks introduces more subtlety into the discussion. He thinks that Reinhold not only reads Kant as an empirical idealist but also is an empirical idealist; that Fichte reads Kant as an empirical idealist and thinks that there is no alternative within theoretical philosophy, but that Fichte himself hopes to avoid empirical idealism within practical philosophy, on the grounds that empirical realism is presupposed by the demands of morality; meanwhile, Hegel reads Kant as an empirical idealist but is not an empirical idealist himself.³⁶

Without entering into the details of these interpretive issues, I want to say enough about them to forestall the charge that the skepticism to which German idealists respond is primarily empirical idealist and arises from a misinterpretation of Kant. In my view, Reinhold may be said to interpret Kant's transcendental idealism as empirical idealism, for reasons that I will give in Chapter 4. But this is because Reinhold misses the significance of the transcendental/empirical distinction, which is precisely the point of German idealist criticisms of his pioneering attempt at systematization. With respect to the others, I will say only that, first, Ameriks is correct to find that neither Fichte nor Hegel—nor, for that matter, Schelling—is an empirical idealist; and, second, we need to distinguish between the way in which Fichte and Schelling interpret “the Kantians”—that is, those followers of Kant who are not sympathetic to German idealism—and the way in which they interpret Kant himself. Before Kant's repudiation in 1799, they assume that Kant himself is not a “Kantian.” After the repudiation, thus in all of Hegel's published writings, they are forced to conclude that Kant is a “Kantian.” But they still think that their own versions of idealism,

35. See Collins (1999), 27: “Kant does not actually assert any idealist conclusion, which he would do only if he contended that there are no things-in-themselves but only ideas that seem to be ideas of such things, or if he argued that we cannot know for sure whether there any things-in-themselves in addition to our ideas of such things. These views would amount to a dogmatic or a problematic idealism concerning things-in-themselves. Jacobi seems to adopt the latter position, but Kant himself propounds neither. It is in the context of these understandings that German idealism turns away from Kant's commitment to things-in-themselves.” Collins does an excellent job of reinterpreting Kantian passages that one can feel compelled to read as espousing a Cartesian conception of the mind, hence as espousing pre-Kantian empirical idealism. But he seems to have no reservations about attributing the pre-Kantian, Cartesian conception not only to Jacobi, who explicitly rejects it, but also to German idealists whose apparently pre-Kantian formulations may also be reinterpreted in the way Collins reinterprets Kant himself, and who may thus be seen as the post-Kantians they explicitly profess to be. See Collins (1999), 25, 161, 180.

36. Ameriks (2000a), 23–24, 107, 110, 173–174, 194, 276, 340.

which seek to be at the same time empirically realistic, represent the true implications of Kant's work, regardless of whether Kant acknowledges those implications.

In any event, I want to suggest that if Jacobi's criticism of Kant is situated within the context of the criticism of philosophy developed in his work as a whole, then that criticism may be reformulated in an adequately post-Kantian manner.

At the end of his life, Jacobi characterizes his earlier response to Kant as follows:

The Dialogue *On Idealism and Realism*, which was published a year earlier than Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, considers only the first, theoretical, part of his system. It is objected that that first part leads to nihilism, and that it does so with such an all-devastating power that no rearguard intervention could recoup what had been lost. It was lost once and for all.³⁷

I suggest that Jacobi's early criticism of Kant be understood within the context of his general argument that philosophy as such leads to *nihilism*—a term that Jacobi first popularized within philosophical discussion.³⁸

Jacobi is very far from being a systematic philosopher. In fact, he is the seminal critic of systematic philosophy as such, who demands a return from philosophical attempts at rational justification and explanation to pre-philosophical, nonsystematic, ordinary, rational *faith*. It is hard to find clear lines of argument in Jacobi, although, according to his own views, the claim that philosophy leads necessarily to nihilism *ought* to be expressible in clear and compelling arguments, unlike his own way of escaping nihilism. Here I will present, in broad outline, a reconstructed line of argument that is rooted in Jacobi's texts, although it is never presented in just this way.³⁹

On his own account, Jacobi's intellectual development is colored by an extraordinary experience at the tender age of eight or nine:

That *extraordinary* thing was a representation of endless duration, quite independent of any religious concept. At the said age, when I was pondering on eternity *a parte ante*, it suddenly came over me with such clarity, and seized me with such violence, that I gave out a loud cry and fell into a kind of swoon. A movement in me, quite natural, forced me to revive

37. Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 19.

38. Jacobi does not use the term *nihilism* until 1799, but he speaks of the threat of annihilation already in 1789. See Jacobi (1998) 1, ÜLS (1789), 1: 216, 258n. On the history of the concept of nihilism, see Süss (1974), Pöggeler (1974), and Gillespie (1995).

39. See Franks (2000).

the same representation as soon as I came to myself, and the result was a state of unspeakable despair. The thought of annihilation, which had always been dreadful to me, now became even more dreadful, nor could I bear the vision of an *eternal forward duration* any better.

... I gradually managed not to be afflicted by this trial so often, and finally managed to free myself from it altogether ...

This representation has often seized me again since then, despite the care that I constantly take to avoid it. I have reason to suspect that I can arbitrarily evoke it in me any time I want; and I believe that it is in my power, were I to do so repeatedly a few times, to take my life within minutes by this means.⁴⁰

Apparently, what makes the young Jacobi faint is the vision of an infinite series of temporal moments. But he finds no relief in the thought of a finite temporal series that simply ends, bordering on nothingness. He is at once horrified and fascinated, both by the idea of an infinite series and by the idea of a finite series. Originally occasioned by the thought of a series of *temporal* moments, this experience of dread seems later to have become associated with the idea of a series of *reasons* or explanatory *conditions*. Thus, as though his very life depends upon it, Jacobi seeks a stable standpoint, one based on a firm foundation, not one that recedes forever or somehow balances on nothing. Hence the title page of his Spinoza-book bears the motto "δος μοι που στῶ" ("Give me a place to stand").⁴¹

At the heart of Jacobi's passion for stability, I suggest, lies an obsession with what I have been calling Agrippan skepticism. His horror at the idea of endless duration becomes a deep dissatisfaction with infinite regresses of justification, while his dread of annihilation becomes a dread of arbitrariness. If Jacobi had mentioned the threat of circularity, he would have given a complete account of the Agrippan trilemma.

In his youth, Jacobi must have been powerfully attracted by the project of escaping the trilemma through the postulation of a fourth alternative or an absolute reason. However, Jacobi's originality lies in this: when he comes to think that the project of escape cannot succeed, he does not become an Agrippan skeptic, nor does he accept as satisfying justifications that are vulnerable to Agrippan trilemma. Instead, he maps out a new alternative. He proposes that we abandon an idea presupposed *both* by Agrippan skep-

40. See Jacobi (1998), ŪLS(1785), 1: 13, 216–218.

41. In his second *Meditation*, Descartes had used the phrase, associated with Archimedes' boast that the science of levers could move even the earth.

ticism and by all three standard philosophical responses to it: the idea that reasons are explanatory conditions and that human reason is the capacity to grasp inferential relations between explananda and their conditions, thereby comprehending why things exist and why they are as they are.

In Jacobi's view, the long descent into nihilism begins as soon as one accepts the demand for justification of what ordinarily requires no justification. Once the demand is accepted, there is no escape whatsoever from the Agrippan trilemma.

The problem with all philosophical attempts to escape the trilemma—and Jacobi recognizes that the attempts have come in many varieties, and that some are better than others—is that, if they are truly creative, they only make things worse. Every appeal to some new kind of intrinsic justification succeeds only in raising the demand for justification about something else that was hitherto taken for granted. Thus, for example, Descartes' *cogito* leads, not to the security of an Archimedean point, but rather to Hume's disturbing discovery that the subject is no more substantial than its objects. The end-result of philosophy is not intrinsic justification but rather the total annihilation of justification, not an absolute something but rather an absolute nothing.

The only genuine escape from Agrippan skepticism, according to Jacobi, would be to reject the initial demand for justification or, better yet, to stop raising it in the first place. To make our escape, we need to see that adequate justification is not *mediation* by some absolute or unconditioned ground, as the philosophical tradition would have it, but the *immediacy* of ordinary life and perception. Ordinary things and persons just *are*—immediately—except for their dependence on God, which is known with as much immediacy as the existence of ourselves and others. Reason is not a faculty of *inference* but a faculty of *perception*.⁴² As soon as we acknowledge the philosophical demand for justification, it is already too late. At that moment, if not before, we have lost our *natural faith* in reason, or else we would not have acknowledged the demand.⁴³ But once it is lost, the immediacy of the ordinary can never be replaced by any philosophical ab-

42. Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 11–12: "Ever since Aristotle the growing tendency among the schools has always been to subordinate immediate knowledge to mediated cognition. The *faculty of perception* that originally grounds everything has been subordinated to the *faculty of reflection*, which is conditioned by abstraction—in other words, the prototype has been subordinated to the ectype; or the essence to the word, and reason to understanding. Indeed, reason has been allowed to sink into understanding entirely, and to disappear in it."

43. For "the natural faith of reason," see Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 56.

solute. On the contrary, to seek a philosophical absolute—an intrinsic justification—is to continue to raise the demand for justification that is, at the same time, the loss of faith, the loss of the only justification there can be.⁴⁴ The absoluteness of philosophy is no substitute for the immediacy of the everyday. Nihilism, then, is the annihilation of the ordinary, an annihilation that is internal to the very activity of philosophizing.

Jacobi's view that philosophy is nihilistic should be compared with Bernard Williams' thesis that reflection may destroy ethical knowledge.⁴⁵ Williams' point depends on the idea that ethical communities use thick concepts "which seem to express a union of fact and value."⁴⁶ In Jacobi's terms, thick concepts express the immediate perception of reason-giving properties. Williams thinks that claims involving thick concepts may amount to knowledge, if those claims are not only true but truth-tracking in ways expressed by appropriate counterfactuals.⁴⁷ However, even if these claims amount to knowledge, this knowledge may be destroyed by reflection:

To say that knowledge is destroyed in such a case is not to say that particular beliefs that once were true now cease to be true. Nor is it to say that people turn out never to have known the things they thought they knew. What it means is that these people once had beliefs of a certain kind, which were in many cases pieces of knowledge; but now, because after reflection they can no longer use concepts essential to those beliefs, they can no longer form beliefs of that kind.⁴⁸

In short, after reflection, the immediate unities of fact and value, property and reason, previously expressed by their thick concepts, are no longer

44. See Jacobi (1983), 1815 Vorrede, 108: "The moment a man sought to establish scientifically the veracity of our representations of a material world that exists beyond them, and independently of them, at that very moment the object that the demonstration wanted to ground disappeared before their eyes. They were left with mere subjectivity, with *sensation*. And thus they discovered idealism."

The moment man sought to prove scientifically the veracity of our representations of an immaterial world that exists beyond them, to prove the substantiality of the human spirit, and of a free Author of this universe who is however distinct from it, of a Providence conscious of its rule, i.e., a *personal* Providence—the moment he tried this, the object likewise disappeared before the eyes of the demonstrators. They were left with merely logical phantoms. And in this way they discovered nihilism."

As this passage shows, Jacobi regards idealism as the annihilation of the material world, and nihilism as the annihilation of the spiritual.

45. Williams (1985), 140–152, 167–171.

46. Williams (1985), 129.

47. Williams (1985), 141–142.

48. Williams (1985), 167.

available to them. So the thick concepts in question are no longer usable, and the claims involving those concepts can no longer be formed.

One important difference between Williams and Jacobi concerns the modal force of their theses. Williams' thesis is only that reflection *may* destroy ethical knowledge, not that it *must*. Accordingly, Williams does not suggest that there is any general feature of reflection that necessarily has a destructive effect. Indeed, he says little about how the destruction might be brought about. He says, for example, that explanations of why we use thick ethical concepts tend not to be justifications for their use, and that, in modern society, reflection typically uses thin concepts such as "right" and "good," and is unavoidably aware that there are many different cultures in which many different thick concepts are employed, so that thin concepts may come to replace some thick concepts. In contrast, Jacobi seems to affirm the stronger thesis that reflection *must* destroy knowledge. He seems also to think that reflection employs a single weapon of destruction: an inferentialist conception of grounding, deployed in response to the Agrippan trilemma.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between criticism of the inferentialist conception as part of a theory and criticism of the inferentialist conception as nihilistic in its effects. It is one thing to argue that the immediately reason-giving character of visual and ethical perception, which is expressed in the use of thick concepts, cannot be accommodated within an inferential account of grounding, and that the inferential account is theoretically inadequate. It is quite another thing to argue that the immediately reason-giving character of visual and ethical perception is *destroyed* by reflection that presupposes the inferentialist conception. Is what Jacobi calls nihilism a charge of the second kind, or is he merely packaging a criticism of the first kind in alarmist rhetoric? What could give plausibility, not merely to the first sort of argument but to the second?

A quick response would be that the inferentialist conception thinks of something's being grounded as that something's being mediated by something else, and that this is plainly inconsistent with that something's being immediate. But it is not clear that this response would yield anything more than a theoretical criticism, and, in any event, it is too quick. It is not hard to distinguish between two senses of "mediated" and "immediate" in a way that shows the inconsistency to be merely apparent. We might distinguish, for example, between the mediation/immediacy of an *act* of perception and the mediation/immediacy of the perception's *content*. There is no inconsis-

tency in the idea of a perception which is immediate as an act, because it involves no inference on the part of the perceiving subject, but which has a content that is mediated, because it can only be justified by means of inferences.⁴⁹

It is best to take Jacobi as offering nothing more than a general schema for the reflective destruction of knowledge, a schema that can be filled out only by his detailed studies of Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. If this is right, then general features of reflection will not suffice to show that the nihilism problem is genuine. This can be shown only by detailed arguments of the sort discussed in Chapter 2, to the effect that philosophical commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason leads to Holistic Monism and that Holistic Monism cannot accommodate immediacy.

Still, does an argument of this sort not amount merely to a theoretical criticism rather than to the more exciting charge of destruction? Williams distinguishes between visual perceptual knowledge, which he does not think is vulnerable to destruction by reflection, and ethical knowledge, which he thinks is vulnerable.⁵⁰ Indeed, Williams might have mentioned optical illusions, such as the Müller-Lyer illusion, which show that a visual perception can be unaffected even by reflection that shows it to be non-veridical. If there is destruction of visual perceptual knowledge, then it must occur in cases where one learns to see as *X* what one previously saw as *Y*. For example, one learns to read, or to read a previously unfamiliar script, so that what one once saw as mere marks one now sees as letters or words. Or one learns to track, so that features of a landscape, previously available for description in terms of color, shape, and so on, have now become readable indicators of the lives and whereabouts of living beings. In these cases, the previously available concepts remain available for description but not for perception. I can describe letters and words as mere collections of marks, but I cannot return to seeing them that way. However, in these cases it seems appropriate to speak not of knowledge being destroyed, but rather of new knowledge being acquired or, at most, of new knowledge replacing old knowledge.

A more promising case, although I am not sure that it can be adequately developed, would be the case of a scientist who is affected by a scientific revolution or paradigm-shift, in a way that is sufficient to undermine the

49. This is part of the upshot of Sellars (1997).

50. Williams (1985), 149–150.

thick concepts via which he had perceptual knowledge under the whole paradigm, but insufficient to give him new concepts with which to acquire new perceptual knowledge.

The thesis that, under the pressure of reflection, one may lose the ability to see the human world in terms of the thick ethical concepts that once seemed compelling, is considerably more plausible than its counterpart in cases of visual perception. Imagine an Englishman, used to perceiving people and their acts in terms of the English class-system, who spends several decades in a culture where such differences do not matter whereas others do. He may retain his ability to use class-concepts, but he now uses them as an external observer would, so that they lack any action-guiding force for him.⁵¹

I know of no place where Jacobi distinguishes between cases of visual perception and cases of ethical judgment, which he also understands perceptually. But it seems possible to ascribe to him, as the most charitable interpretation of his view, a twofold criticism of the inferentialist conception of grounding: first, that it is theoretically inadequate to account for perceptual immediacy and, second, that it is practically destructive in the case of ethical perception.

In those works of his that engage with philosophers, Jacobi is troubled by the destructive implications of philosophical reflection for one's sense of one's own freedom, hence for one's capacity for moral agency. Moreover, his novels may be read as concerned with just these ethical implications. For philosophical reflection, which considers all projects and forms of life as equally in need of justification, is portrayed as destroying *individual character*, the enduring ground of immediate commitment. Thus Jacobi's

51. What is controversial here is not, as in the case of visual perception, whether such concepts may be lost, but instead whether the employment of such concepts ever amounts to ethical knowledge—that is, *propositional* knowledge, which is truth-tracking—in the first place. Thus Moore (1991), 99, argues that all cases that Williams would describe as cases of propositional knowledge that may be recognized by an observer as knowledge without being knowledge *for the observer* can be characterized, with less paradoxicality, as cases in which “what the natives have is practical knowledge, and . . . what the observer has recognized is the following: that it is partly by uttering these things to one another, albeit in accord with what they know or believe to be the case, that the natives are able to find their way around in a social world.” If, Moore argues, the knowledge undermined by reflection is practical, then it never claimed to be true in the first place, and the fact of its undermining does not have the importance ascribed to it by Williams. Much depends, as Moore says, on the extent to which one “wants to honour the phenomenology of these practices” (102), which seem truth involving to their participants.

protagonists, Woldemar and Allwill, must either overcome nihilism or live it.⁵² To be sure, the target of these novels is the impassioned *Herzensmensch* of *Sturm und Drang*, rather than the overly reflective Spinozist or Kantian who is the target of his overtly philosophical works. But Jacobi makes the connection between the two targets explicit when he says in the "Letter to Erhard O**" appended to *Allwill*: "As little as infinite space can determine the particular nature of any one body, so little can the *pure reason of man* constitute with its will (which is evenly good everywhere since it is *one and the same* in all men) the foundation of a particular, *differentiated* life, or impart to the *actual person* its proper individual value."⁵³

There is a parallelism, then, between the *Sturm und Drang* celebration of passions that lack immediate grounding in individual personalities, and the Spinozistic or Kantian thesis that sensible properties lack immediate grounding in individual, finite things. Individuation is a problem not only for physics and metaphysics, but also for life. Jacobi may think that the physical and metaphysical problem would be merely theoretical, *if it could be restricted to philosophy*, but that it cannot be—or, at any rate, is not now—thus restricted. When philosophical reflection raises its questions about ethical matters, including the freedom of the ethical subject, then what might have been a merely theoretical inadequacy becomes a practical problem that can seriously affect the life of an individual and, perhaps, of an entire society.

Jacobi's criticism of Kant may easily be seen to instantiate the general pattern of his thought. In order to save what Kant *calls* the immediacy of sense, he argues that all objects of experience are merely internal representations, including the subject insofar as we experience it. But Kant has

52. The main character of Jacobi's novel, EA, is, one might say, an ethical nihilist. For his will is entirely perspectival, flowing entirely into passions that are relative to given situations and lacking any genuine individual character. He is all will, and therefore nothing, just as Spinoza's God and Kant's transcendental subject are all being, and therefore nothing. This version of the problem of free will—how can a will give itself determinacy and not merely be determinate in response to the whole of which it is a part?—differs from the more familiar version—how can a will determine itself and not be determined by efficient causes? But I find that the unfamiliar version plays a significant role in German idealism, perhaps a more significant role than the familiar version.

53. Jacobi (1792), EA, 293. The idea that nihilism specifically implicates and targets the will seems crucial to later uses of the term, notably by Nietzsche in the wake of Schopenhauer. Ulrich Schlösser has suggested to me that it would be possible to interpret Jacobi as reserving the term *nihilism* strictly for cases in which the will is at stake. This suggestion is worth exploring elsewhere.

salvaged only a pseudo-immediacy. He has argued, perhaps even more cogently than Hume, that neither the subject nor its objects can be known in any intrinsically justified way. And he has missed Hume's naturalistic insight, from which Jacobi takes some of his inspiration, that the targets of philosophical questioning are ordinarily taken on what can only be called faith, and that philosophy and ordinary faith can never be reconciled.

I argued earlier that, insofar as Jacobi's accusation of nihilism is based on interpreting Kant as an empirical idealist, it is not to be taken seriously as a criticism of Kant or as an interesting motivation for German idealism. However, now that the focus has been broadened, Jacobi's accusation can be reformulated in a more interesting way, this time in a register that seems more metaphysical than epistemological.

In Jacobi's massively influential book on Spinoza—the first edition of which precedes his criticism of transcendental idealism—he confronts a philosopher who is not, in his opinion, an empirical idealist. One reason for Jacobi's fascination with Spinoza is precisely that Spinoza sees how to avoid epistemological nihilism, but nevertheless follows the metaphysical road to what Jacobi later calls nihilism with unprecedented rigor and clarity.⁵⁴ Inspired by the Principle of Sufficient Reason—which Jacobi prefers to formulate as “*a nihilo nihil fit*”—Spinoza's uncompromising quest for genuine substance—for an intrinsically justified subject of predication—leads him to the remarkable formula, which we discussed in Chapter 2: “*Determinatio est negatio, seu determinatio ad rem juxta suum esse non pertinet.*” As Jacobi glosses the formula: “Individual things, therefore, so far as they only exist in a certain determinate mode, are *non-entia*, the indeterminate infinite being is the one single true *ens real, hoc est, est omne esse, et praeter quod nullum datur esse.*”⁵⁵ That is, Spinoza attempts to escape the Agrippan trilemma with respect to being, but he succeeds in annihilating the positive being of the individual things of everyday life.

54. Jacobi acknowledges Spinoza's influence in epistemological matters. Thus Jacobi derives his conception of the natural faith of reason not only from Hume and Reid, but also from Spinoza, “who drew a clear distinction between being certain and not doubting.” See Jacobi (1998), 1, ÜLS (1785), 1: 27n Jacobi also credits Spinoza for influencing his rejection of empirical idealism. See Jacobi (1983), DHG, 108–109.

55. Jacobi (1998) 1, ÜLS(1785), 1: 100. Jacobi quotes the last eleven words from *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, in Spinoza (1925), 2: 29: “The origin of Nature is indeed this being, unique, infinite, [here Jacobi's quotation begins] that is, it is all being, and beyond which there is nothing.” The translation is my own. Compare Spinoza (2002), 21.

Jacobi cites Kant's first *Critique* to illustrate his point about Spinoza.⁵⁶ The implication, though not developed explicitly, is that, just as Spinoza annihilates the positive being of everyday things by making them entirely dependent on the substantial unity of God, so Kant annihilates the positive being of everyday things by making them transcendently ideal. What Kant calls an appearance is not a thing in itself, with its own positive character, but a *nonentity*, whose being is determinate only in relation to the whole of which it is a part, and ultimately to the transcendental conditions that make up the human perspective.

Here, then, is a metaphysical version of the charge that transcendental idealism amounts to a new kind of philosophical negation, to a nihilism that is *even more destructive* than empirical idealism and the skepticism with which it is associated.⁵⁷ This version is not so easily rejected. As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, Kant himself argues that:

everything in our cognition that belongs to intuition . . . contains nothing but mere relations; namely, of places in one intuition (extension), alteration of places (motion), and laws in accordance with which this alteration is determined (moving forces). But what is present in the location, or what it produces in the things themselves besides the alteration of place, is not given through these relations. Now through mere relations no thing in itself is cognized; it is therefore right to judge that since nothing is given to us through outer sense except mere representation of relation, outer sense can also contain in its representation only the relation of an object to the subject, and not that which is internal to the object in itself. It is exactly the same in the case of inner sense.⁵⁸

As I have argued above, this passage must be read in an appropriately transcendental way—not as an expression of the empirical idealist view that the objects of sense are *mental* representations relative to a subject, but

56. Jacobi (1998), *ÜLS* (1785), 1: 105, n.1, citing Kant (1900–), *KrV*, A107.

57. Thus I disagree with the characterization of nihilism in Beiser (2002), 3, 642 n.2, as the doctrine “that we know only our own representations” (3) or as “doubt about the existence of anything beyond one’s immediate representations” (642 n.2). Cf. Beiser (1987), 82. For Beiser seems to have in mind, respectively, dogmatic and problematic versions of empirical idealism, neither of which would fit Spinoza according to Jacobi. At any rate, Beiser does not explain how to construe these characterizations in an adequately transcendental fashion that would motivate the challenge of nihilism for post-Kantians. However, Beiser emphasizes that the skeptical considerations adduced by Maimon are not based on empirical idealism so, differing from my own view, he must find no connection between those considerations and the threat of nihilism.

58. Kant (1900–), *KrV*, B67.

rather as an expression of the view that the objects of sense are accessible to us only via ineliminably perspectival properties. Nevertheless, the passage states that the objects of sense have determinate being, not in virtue of their own individual characters, but rather in relation to the spatio-temporal, dynamic whole of which they are parts. And, as Kant goes on to argue in the *Analytic*, that spatio-temporal, dynamic whole itself has determinate being only in relation to the transcendental conditions that make up the human perspective. So if, as Jacobi insists, ordinary things have determinate being in virtue of their own individual characters, then Kant has annihilated ordinary things, substituting for them the phenomena of Newtonian physics, all of whose properties Kant has now shown to be ineliminably perspectival.

I can now reformulate Jacobi's nihilism accusation in a metaphysical register. On the one hand, transcendental idealism annihilates everyday things with their immediately determinate being. On the other hand, Kant himself acknowledges that genuine entities have individual characters. That is why he insists that we not only *can* but *must* think things in themselves as the grounds of appearances, "For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears."⁵⁹ Here, Jacobi might say, is a residue of Kant's pre-philosophical faith in ordinary individual things. But it is inevitable that a more thoroughgoing Kantian will eliminate the thing in itself. For the thing in itself cannot do what, on this view, it is intended to do. Kant's things in themselves are not the perceptible individuals of ordinary life. The former's mode of individuation is nothing like that of the latter. Kant's insistence that appearances have some ground beyond the world and that we must think of this ground as noumenal in the positive sense does nothing to restore the ontological immediacy that Kant's Copernican revolution has annihilated. If things in themselves do not manifest their natures in perception, then in what sense can they be the things that appear? Transcendental idealism is, in effect, the absurd conclusion that there can *only* be appearance without anything that appears. Kant himself recognizes that such a conclusion would be absurd. But this does not mean that he manages to avoid it.

In my reformulated version, Jacobi once again confronts Kant with a dilemma. Either Kant may develop his philosophy consistently by em-

59. Kant (1900–), KrV, Bxxvi–xxvii.

bracing what Jacobi regards as nihilism (in this case, the view that, insofar as individual entities have intrinsic properties, there can be no individual entities whatsoever), or Kant may retain his residual faith in individual entities, but only by giving up his philosophy—indeed, only by rejecting the philosophical demand for justification altogether.

Now we have another way of expressing the motivation for the German idealist rejection of things in themselves. In effect, the German idealists take the first horn of Jacobi's dilemma. They regard an appeal to transcendently real things in themselves, which are supposed hypothetically to possess intrinsic properties and to ground irreducibly relational appearances, as an unhappy compromise that fails to achieve its goal of avoiding nihilism. First, the appeal is incompatible with a thoroughgoing commitment to absolute grounding at the *transcendental* level because it involves the modal transcendence of the absolute, as discussed in Chapter 2. Second, even if the appeal were compatible with a thoroughgoing commitment to absolute grounding, it would still be incapable of restoring individuality and thus of undoing nihilism at the *empirical* level.

This reformulated version of what Jacobi calls nihilism counts, I claim, as a kind of post-Kantian skepticism.⁶⁰ It amounts to the puzzle: after Kant's Copernican revolution, how is everyday knowledge of individual things and persons so much as possible? Or how is it so much as possible that there *are* any everyday individuals to know? As these two formulations are supposed to suggest, the question may be put epistemologically, but it seems primarily metaphysical or, say, ontological. Any post-Kantian skepticism should, I think, have this characteristic, since it will inherit some version of the claim, central to Kant's revolution, that "the *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience."⁶¹ If Jacobi prefers to speak of nihilism rather than skepticism, it is because he believes he has uncovered a deeper diagnosis of philosophy's power of negation than the notions of doubt or ignorance would suggest.

One might also express the challenge of nihilism by asking: how is it so

60. According to my argument, it is intimately related to Agrippan skepticism. For the idea that Hegel is concerned with ancient rather than modern—that is, "Cartesian"—skepticism, see Forster (1989) and Westphal (1989a). By extending across the range of German idealists, my argument is intended to explain the roots of the Hegelian concern addressed by these authors.

61. Kant (1900–), KrV, A111. Cf. A158/B197: "The conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience."

much as possible that there are any individuals to *be*? This makes it clear that the question is not merely academic, but also—to speak anachronistically—existential.

Now we have arrived at an adequately reformulated version of the worry that Kant expressed in the second *Critique*: without intrinsic properties on the transcendental level, how may the freedom of the moral agent be saved? To show that it can—and, more generally, that the immediacy of everyday beliefs, objects, and persons can be saved—is one of the main burdens undertaken by German idealist systems.⁶² A central idea is that what we might call a locus of agency can be constituted through reciprocal interactions. In particular, Fichte pioneers the idea that a person can come to be through an event of reciprocal recognition, in which a preexisting person summons a latent person to act, thus recognizing that latent person as a latent person, and in which the previously latent person becomes an actual person by responding to the summons—positively, negatively or even with indifference—and hence by recognizing both the other and him/herself as persons. Schelling and Hegel develop the idea and undertake to show that organisms can come to be through the reciprocal interaction of physical forces, that consciousness can arise through the reciprocal interaction of organisms, and that self-consciousness can arise through the reciprocal interaction of conscious beings. Here I want only to note what is at stake in such accounts. By accepting Jacobi's original twist on the Agrippan problematic and by rejecting Kant's doctrine of things in themselves, they must either show how there can be immediacy without intrinsic properties or they must concede the charge of nihilism.

3.5

One effect of Jacobi's work is to orient the German idealist conception of the empirical decisively towards the everyday or the ordinary, where the ordinary is contrasted—indeed, in tension—with the philosophical. Now,

62. Thus, for example, in Fichte's popular presentation, BM, the doubt that gives Book 1 its title is, in the first place, not an epistemological anxiety, but an ontological anxiety about how the freedom I ascribe to myself in immediate self-consciousness can be compatible with "reflection on the whole of nature," which shows me to be nothing but a link in a chain of thoroughgoing determinacy and causal determination. Epistemological skepticism is encountered only in book two, in the attempt to resolve doubt by philosophizing from a solely theoretical standpoint.

as we saw earlier in this chapter, the *Factum* of mathematical and natural science plays a significant role in Kant's thinking about the empirical and its relation to skepticism. If scientific knowledge-claims were not continuous with everyday knowledge-claims, then the unquestionably respectable epistemic status of the former could not confirm the latter against skeptical doubt. What, then, does Jacobi have to say about science? Is natural science an ordinary exercise, part of what Jacobi wants to save from nihilism? Or is it another manifestation of philosophy's doomed quest for the absolute?

It is clear that Jacobi views science as philosophical, hence as nihilistic. Scientific comprehension, according to Jacobi, involves the construction of ideal mechanisms of generation that are substituted for the real things for which they are intended to account. Instead of explaining real things, the scientist annihilates them.⁶³ Although this view is not based on a detailed examination of natural science, it finds a certain confirmation in the thinking of Maimon, who is deeply engaged with the natural and mathematical sciences of his day. Maimon's attitude is roughly the opposite of Jacobi's. Jacobi wants to save the everyday from annihilation, whereas Maimon regards the everyday as something very like superstition and would be only too glad to see it go. But their arguments tend in the same direction. For the German idealists influenced by them, the everyday and philosophy are locked in a life-and-death struggle. No appeal to science as it stands can resolve the struggle, for mechanistic physics annihilates the everyday no less than metaphysics. Only the construction of the system can save the everyday from philosophy, and philosophy from itself.

But this can have two possible consequences for natural science. One possibility is that we can save ourselves from the nihilistic effects of natural science by deriving its first principle from the absolute first principle of philosophy, hence by subordinating natural science to philosophy. This would show the justification for a mechanistic understanding of nature and would prevent us from attempting to understand ourselves mechanistically. But it would also leave natural science as philosophy finds it. This is Fichte's view.

Another possibility is that, insofar as we derive the first principle of natural science from the absolute first principle of philosophy, we can save

63. See di Giovanni's comments in Jacobi (1994), 162–163.

ourselves from nihilism by grounding and encouraging nonmechanistic approaches to physics. This is the view of Schelling and Hegel, and underlies their development of *Naturphilosophie*.⁶⁴

3.6

For an initial understanding of what is at stake in the inclusion of *Naturphilosophie* within the German idealist project, it is helpful to consider a form of post-Kantian skepticism rooted in Maimon's work. Unlike Jacobi, Maimon does not think Kantian dualism involves a distinction between the mental and the physical, so he does not reduce Kant to a Cartesian empirical idealist who cannot escape Cartesian skepticism.⁶⁵ As we have seen in Chapter 1, however, Maimon misinterprets Kantian dualism as involving a real distinction between finite and infinite intelligibility. So we must consider whether the post-Kantian skepticisms developed by Maimon depend, either for their being or their force, on a misinterpretation of Kantian dualism.

This second possibility for post-Kantian skepticism involves accepting as valid Kant's argument that synthetic *a priori*—or categorical—principles make experience possible, while at the same time finding reason to doubt that we actually have experience, hence reason to doubt that the categories may be justifiably applied to the objects of perception. In Maimon's usage—drawn from but not identical with Kant's—the question whether we actually have experience is the *questio quid facti*.⁶⁶

This must sound bizarre. For, in the Anglophone philosophical tradition,

64. In this formulation of the motivation to *Naturphilosophie*, I have been helped by Friedman (2005).

65. For Maimon's rejection of the Cartesian interpretation, see, e.g., Maimon (2000a), *Logik*, 5: 358–359, where he criticizes Aenesidemus for arguing that transcendental idealism is skepticism because it does not enable assessment of the correspondence between our representations and things in themselves. See Beiser (1987) 285–323 and (2002) 248–252.

66. Kant distinguishes between the question *quid facti* and the question *quid juris* in Kant (1900–), A84/B116. On Kant's use of legal terminology see Henrich (1989) and Proops (2003). Proops makes an interesting case for the claim that the question *quid facti* is the question whether the concepts at stake have an empirical or *a priori* origin, the question addressed by the metaphysical deduction. By arguing that the question *quid facti* is relevant to the question *quid juris*, Proops departs from the interpretative mainstream and approaches Maimon's position. However, as we shall see, Maimon would argue that a metaphysical deduction is necessary but insufficient to settle the question *quid facti*, since what must be shown is not only that we possess concepts with an *a priori* origin, but also that we actually employ these concepts in our cognitions.

to have experience is roughly equivalent to having a life of the mind in the thinnest sense. This may be understood either in empiricist fashion—as the raw impressions given to the senses prior to conceptualization—or in Cartesian fashion—as the flow of mental events within the self-enclosed space of an individual mind. Kant's Transcendental Deduction has frequently been construed as an attempt to show that categorial principles make experience in *one of these thin senses* possible—that they make possible a life of the mind. This view has attracted so many interpreters in part because it allows them to view Kant as attempting a *refutation* of skepticism—as arguing, from a premise that not even a skeptic would deny, to a conclusion incompatible with skepticism.⁶⁷

But Maimon does not in fact doubt the actuality of experience in the thinnest empiricist or Cartesian sense. His view seems less bizarre when situated within the context of a line of interpretation initiated by Johann Friedrich Schultz, Kant's friend and, later, designated spokesman. As Frederick Beiser has pointed out, Schultz is the first to draw attention to the difficulties attending Kant's conception of experience and its role in the Deduction.⁶⁸ Indeed, Schultz's discussion is fateful because it is determined, not directly by the Deduction, but by Kant's distinction in the *Prolegomena* between judgments of perception and judgments of experience, a distinction whose relationship to the A and B versions of the Deduction remains controversial and oblique.⁶⁹ Other contemporaneous dis-

67. See, for example, Strawson (1966), 85: "If it would be a disappointment of our analytical hopes to find an argument resting on the assumption (or definition) that experience necessarily involves knowledge of *objects*, the topics of *objective* judgments, how much more would those hopes be disappointed by an argument which assumes that experience is necessarily of an objective and spatio-temporally unitary world." For Strawson (1966), 98, the Deduction's starting point is, rather, "The notion of a single consciousness to which different experiences belong," and those experiences need not, by assumption or definition, be of objects, let alone "of an objective and spatio-temporally unitary world." The task of the Deduction is to show that we could not have any experiences in the minimal sense unless we had some experiences of an objective and unitary world.

68. Beiser (1987), 205–208. Beck (1978) argues that Kant used the term *experience* ambiguously in the opening sentences of the B edition, and Guyer (1987), 79–86, has argued that there is a related ambiguity in the method and goal of the Transcendental Deduction. For a decisive refutation of the ambiguity charge, see Engstrom (1994), n.6. See also Kant (1900–), Prol., 4: 305n., where he distinguishes between the perception in an experience, which can ground merely contingent judgments, and judgments of experience, which claim necessary and universal validity. This distinction is helpful in clarifying apparent ambiguities elsewhere.

69. Judgments of perception express "only the logical connection of perceptions in a thinking subject," claiming to be "hold only for us (i.e., for our subject)" and, indeed, "only in my present

cussions, including Maimon's, follow Schultz's path, whether under his influence or because of the direct impact of the *Prolegomena*. Thus, when Maimon argues that Kant has illicitly assumed the actuality of experience, he is construing Kantian experience as the employment of judgments of experience, in which pure concepts of the understanding are applied to objects given to the senses, expressing putatively necessary and universal connections among appearances.⁷⁰ As Maimon reads the Transcendental Deduction, Kant's argument depends on the assumption that we actually have experience *in this sense*. This assumption is open to dispute not only by Cartesian skeptics but also—and, for Maimon, more significantly—by Humean empiricists.

It is helpful to review Schultz's brief but seminal discussion. The premise of the Deduction, he writes, seems to be either that we make judgments of perception or that we make judgments of experience. Either alternative encounters difficulties. First, suppose the premise to be that we make judgments of perception. Then Kant seems committed to the absurd claim that every particular judgment of perception (e.g., "the sun shining on the stone precedes the stone becoming warm") necessarily presupposes some particular judgment of experience (e.g., "the sunshine warmed the stone"), and thus presupposes the objective validity of the categories.⁷¹ Besides, there appears to be an outright contradiction between Kant's claim in the *Prolegomena* that judgments of perception require only logical, not categorical connection, and Kant's argument in the Deduction.⁷² Second, suppose the

state of perception." In contrast, judgments of experience subsume perceptions under categories and thus claim to be "valid at all times for us and for everybody else." See Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 297–301. For a seminal discussion, see Prauss (1971), 102–197. Collins (1999), 52, has no proposal for avoiding a Cartesian interpretation of Kant's claim in the *Prolegomena* that all our judgments are at first only of perception, although he does not exclude the possibility of avoidance. For a useful attempt at non-Cartesian interpretation, see Longuenesse (1998), 167–195.

70. Maimon is aware that Kant's usage merits special scrutiny. See Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 192, for a reference to experience "in Kant's sense." Throughout the *Essay*, Maimon makes it clear that the "empirical propositions" discussed by Kant are judgments of experience claiming necessary connections among sensuously given objects. See, for example, Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 4–5, 73, 127–128, 184–185.

71. Here Schultz neglects the distinction between particular applications of the categories (judgments of experience) and categorical principles. In contrast, the distinction is central to Maimon's thinking about the Deduction. See below.

72. Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 298. For an insightful attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction, see Longuenesse (1998), 167–195. For criticism of Longuenesse's account of the transformation of judgments of perception into judgments of experience, see Friedman (2000).

premise to be that we make judgments of experience—which, Schultz says, is probably Kant's "true meaning" in the Deduction. Then, as Johann August Heinrich Ulrich had already pointed out in the work—Schultz is reviewing, the Deduction seems trivial: "To be sure, everyone sees that no *judgment of experience* would be possible without the principle of causality, that is, that without it we could never infer that B must *always* and *necessarily* follow A. However, this proposition is almost *identical* and much too scanty. It could not be Kant's intention to demonstrate nothing more than this."⁷³ In any event, a Deduction from judgments of experience would surely beg the question, not only against Hume, but also against a certain kind of rationalism. For the existence of universal and necessary connections among sensible appearances is exactly what is doubted by Hume and is exactly what is denied by the proponent of pre-established harmony—without real connection—between the empirical and rational orders.⁷⁴

Maimon reads Kant according to a version of Schultz's second proposal: as an argument from the actuality of judgments of experience. But Maimon's version is superior to Schultz's because it does not trivialize Kant's Deduction. In Maimon's view, the Deduction proceeds as follows:

1. We make particular judgments of experience, e.g. "the sunshine warms the stone," which claim necessary and universal connections among sensible appearances.
2. But no matter how many times one repeats particular judgments of a certain type, repetition can never justify belief in a universal principle, that *every* event is *necessarily* the effect of a cause from which it follows according to a law.
3. However, we could not make judgments of experience, as we actually do, unless we presupposed universal principles.
4. Therefore, the pure concepts of the understanding may be validly applied, with universality and necessity, to sensuously given objects.⁷⁵

Unlike Schultz's version, Maimon's does not render the Deduction "almost identical" because it distinguishes between particular judgments of expe-

73. Schultz (1785), 298, reprinted in Landau (ed.) (1991), 245.

74. Kant addresses the rationalist in question in the B version of the deduction. See Kant (1900–), KrV, B167–168.

75. See, for example, Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 5–6, 186–187.

rience and universal categorial principles. But, like Schultz's version, Maimon's leaves the Humean skeptic untouched.⁷⁶ For it assumes that we actually make judgments of experience, that we actually apply the pure concept of, say, causality, to sensibly given objects and events. But that is exactly what the Humean skeptic doubts or denies.

Maimon has two grounds for doubting that we actually make judgments of experience.

A

His first argument is that Kant has given an inaccurate description of our actual practices of judgment and that the inadequacy of this account has led Kant to assume *without justification* that no Humean, psychological account of those practices can ever be given.

Although the texts are far from clear, I think that, if we are to avoid contradictions and to be faithful to Maimon's language, we must explain his claim in two ways. *Scientific* causal judgments do not apply the category of causality because their analysis shows that they make no claims whatsoever about universal and necessary connections. *Ordinary* causal judgments do not apply the category of causality because, although they purport to make claims about universal and necessary connections, their use belies the claims they purport to make.⁷⁷

The account of causal judgments given in the *Versuch* and in Maimon's commentary to Chapter 68 of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* is an account of the use of the concept of causality in natural science: "For what does one understand in natural science (*Naturlehre*) by the word 'cause,' except the development and dissolution of a phenomenon; so that one finds the sought after continuity between it and the antecedent phenom-

76. Maimon does not address Schultz's rationalist, who is committed to pre-established harmony between the rational and the empirical, perhaps because such a view seems to Maimon only half-heartedly rationalist, equivocal in its commitment to infinite intelligibility.

77. This is not the place to evaluate Maimon's proposed accounts. Suffice it to say that one may reject those specific accounts and still find reason to question the assumption that we apply a category of causality—in Kant's sense—in both scientific and ordinary explanation. For example, Russell (1917), 180–208, argues that "the law of causality" plays no role in mature science, which instead employs the mathematical idea of a function. More recently, Anscombe (1971) has argued that the ordinary concept of causation does not involve universality and necessity. For developments of Anscombe's arguments, see Harré and Madden (1975) and Putnam (1999), 75–76, 141–142, 144–145.

enon?"⁷⁸ When continuity—maximal identity or minimal difference—is judged to occur between two phenomena, then the transition from the first to the second is judged to be an *alteration* of a single underlying determinable, not a transition between phenomena grounded in distinct determinables. But no claim is made about the necessity of the transition or about its exemplification of a universal law governing relations between phenomena of the relevant types. If this analysis is correct, then scientific causal judgments do not apply a category—a concept of necessary and universal connection—to sensuously given objects.

Maimon sometimes argues, not that the meaning of "cause" is noncategorical, but that its use is based on an illusion or self-deception. In these passages, I suggest, he is discussing ordinary causal judgments. Unlike scientific causal judgments, ordinary causal judgments have the *form* of claims about necessary and universal connections. But this form, revealed by analysis, misrepresents the synthesis by which we actually arrive at the judgment, a synthesis that involves psychologically explainable habituation, not the application of a transcendently necessary *a priori* principle. Thus, for example, Maimon writes:

I deny, says my [skeptical] friend, that 'Fire decomposes wood,' this expression so very useful in practical employment, is a judgment of the understanding (having necessity and universality). With justification, one can assert only that one has found it to be so whenever one has perceived fire in the vicinity of wood, but not that it *must* be so. The fact that the common man gives this expression the form of a necessary and universal judgment rests upon a *lack of philosophical knowledge* and of insight into the difference between a putatively necessary and universal judgment made with justification, and this [judgment] which is taken for one by means of an illusion.⁷⁹

In passages like these, Maimon's point is that Kant has not refuted Humean skepticism, and has therefore failed to deduce the objective reality

78. Maimon (2000a), Tr, 2: 140.

79. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 74. See also Str, 4: 301–302: "Skepticism doubts the fact and seeks to establish that the witness of common sense is not valid, since it rests on an illusion explainable psychologically." See also KU, 7: 667: "The Kantian critical philosophy is indeed sufficiently grounded *formaliter*; it has the form of a complete system. But not *materialiter*. The facts, which are laid at the ground of this system, are not provable. The testimony of the common sense is indeed not valid, but rests rather on this self-deception." See PhW, 3: 44, for the claim that the Kantian categories are transcendental fictions, not genuine concepts of the understanding. On common usage, see also KU, 7: 58–59, cited at n.85 below. For Maimon, genuine categories are mathematical. See Logik, 5: 229–253.

of the categories, even if Kant has argued validly that we would have no experience without the validity of categorical principles.

Maimon is indeed responding to a genuine feature of Kant's thinking. For, in Kant's view, a Humean approach to the categories may be legitimately excluded *in advance* of the detailed argument offered in the Transcendental Deduction. Kant seems to have two reasons for holding this view. First, any empirical derivation of, say, the concept of causality would be not an *explanatory* account but rather a *revision* of our practices of causal judgment:

To the synthesis of cause and effect there belongs a dignity that can never be expressed empirically, namely, that the effect does not merely come along with the cause, but is posited *through* it and arises *from* it. The strict universality of the rule is therefore not any property of empirical rules, which cannot acquire anything more through induction than comparative universality, i.e., widespread usefulness. But now the use of the pure concepts of understanding would be entirely altered if one were to treat them only as empirical products.⁸⁰

Second, the categories may be deduced either empirically or transcendently, but not both. If they may be empirically deduced, then skepticism about their application to sensuously given objects is insuperable. But "the empirical derivation, however, to which both of them [Locke and Hume] resorted, cannot be reconciled with the reality of the scientific cognition *a priori* that we possess, that namely of *pure mathematics* and *general natural science*; and is therefore refuted by the fact."⁸¹

Now, Maimon agrees with Kant that Hume cannot account for the *a priori* knowledge attained in pure mathematics. The concepts of pure mathematics can be neither empirically derived nor reduced to relations of ideas. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Maimon thinks that the concepts of pure mathematics are immediately constitutive of their objects and that it is in this respect alone that human cognition is like divine cognition.⁸² But this has no clear implications for the categories, which Kant claims can be constitutive only through the mediation of pure sensible intuition.

Furthermore, Maimon does not see why Kant is entitled to assume that the possibility of an empirical deduction of the categories—hence, the pos-

80. Kant (1900–), KrV, A91–92/B123–124. See Prol, 4: 258–259 on Hume's limited revisionist intention.

81. Kant (1900–), KrV, B128.

82. See 141–143 above.

sibility of empirical skepticism—has been excluded by the fact of natural science. First, he does not think that Kant is entitled to assume without argument that natural science uses the concept of causality to claim necessary and universal connections among phenomena. Second, he does not think that Kant is entitled to assume without argument that natural science and ordinary judgments use the pivotal concept of causality in the same way. This last point entails that, even if Kant were justified in claiming that the actuality of natural science excludes the possibility of empirical skepticism, the possibility of empirical skepticism about *ordinary* causal judgments would still be a threat—a threat that Kant does not even see the need to confront. So Kant begs the question *quid facti* with respect to natural science, and he fails even to raise the question with respect to ordinary judgments.⁸³

Finally, Maimon does not accept Kant's argument that an empirical derivation of a putatively *a priori* concept amounts to a revision, not an explanation. This argument rules out, in effect, any explanation of a judgmental practice that entails skepticism about that practice. Rather than weighing the consequences of a putative explanation, we should consider whether the explanation is a good one. As Maimon says, "It is a well-known proposition, which Newton lays at the foundation of his philosophy of nature, that one should assume no new principle for the explanation of a phenomenon, which may be explained from other, long since known principles."⁸⁴ If there is a good empirical explanation of the acquisition of the

83. See Maimon (2000a), KU, 7: 58, where Philalethes, Maimon's representative, responds as follows to the Kantian claim that the concept of causality in common usage involves the strict universality of a rule and that a Humean empirical derivation would amount to a loss of the concept: "One cannot build with certainty upon the commonest use of the understanding. The [commonest usage] distinguishes itself excellently from the scientific use of the understanding insofar as the latter seeks the *ground* and the *mode of origination* of some given *knowledge*; [while] the former satisfies itself with this *knowledge in itself* and its application in common life; thus the common human understanding can deceive itself and believe itself to be in possession of a cognition which has no *objective ground*. As an example, you bring forth the proposition that all alterations must have a cause, and you say that the concept of cause would be wholly lost if one were to [explain] it as Hume did, etc., because it contains necessity and strict universality. But friend! Here you are doing the honorable Hume a great injustice. He derives from association of ideas and custom, not the *concept* of cause, but only its supposed *use*. Thus he doubts only its *objective reality*, since he shows that the common human understanding could have arrived at belief in the use of this concept through the confusion of the merely *subjective* and *comparatively universal* with the *objectively* and *absolutely universal*."

84. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 239n.

concept of cause—and Kant has not argued that there is not—then we should not throw away the explanation we have, in order to seek a transcendental explanation. But that is exactly what Kant does, just before he begins his Transcendental Deduction, when he assumes that the question *quid facti* has been answered because there can be no empirical derivation of the categories.

B

At this point, a Kantian may raise the following objection, to which Maimon's second reason for doubting that we actually have experience may be seen as a response. To be sure—the Kantian may concede—Kant says, before beginning the Transcendental Deduction, that skepticism is refuted by the fact of pure mathematics and natural science. Nevertheless, the argument of the Deduction as a whole provides independent grounds for excluding a Humean empirical derivation of the categories. For it is *not* a premise of the Deduction that we actually make judgments of experience, subsuming the sensuously given under some category. The relevant premise is rather that we have "some empirical knowledge," that we actually make synthetic *a posteriori* judgments that do not apply any category and that make no claims to necessity and universality.⁸⁵ Kant argues, in brief, that such judgments presuppose the transcendental unity of apperception—strikingly absent from the discussions of both Schultz and Maimon—which in turn requires principles for the unification of the sensuously given manifold provided only by the categories. Such an argument does not purport to refute the Cartesian skeptic. But it does not obviously beg the question against the Humean skeptic by assuming any actual judgments of experience.

This is an important objection because Maimon's reading of the Transcendental Deduction is obviously objectionable as it stands.⁸⁶ However,

85. See Ameriks (1978), 282: "On this interpretation Kant's premise is not, as is often assumed, Newtonian and Euclidian, but is the relatively weak assumption of some empirical knowledge." Such an interpretation is suggested by Kant's examples (the perception of a house and of the freezing of water) at B162. I am grateful to Ameriks for helpful discussion of this and related issues.

86. However, a similar reading has been given considerable weight in the extensive discussions of the Deduction in Guyer (1987). See Guyer (1987), 85, where a classification of forms of the Deduction is given, and where form IA is said to be exhibited by arguments or interpretations maintaining that "judgments about empirical objects are possible, and these actually contain some synthetic *a priori* knowledge which implies the *further a priori* knowledge of the categories." Thus,

Maimon's second argument does not depend on the disputable claim that Kant assumes the actuality of judgments of experience as a premise. For even if Kant assumes only the actuality of some empirical knowledge, without any claims of universality and necessity, he surely wishes, in the argument of the Analytic of the whole, to show that the principles presupposed by that knowledge *render judgments of experience possible*. Maimon's second argument, if correct, can be taken to entail that even if we actually have some empirical knowledge that presupposes categorial principles, the presupposed principles are nevertheless *indeterminate* and cannot be rendered determinately applicable to the sensuously given in particular judgments of experience. Thus it is the Analytic of Principles, rather than the Analytic of Concepts containing the Transcendental Deduction, that is directly threatened by Maimon's second argument. Still, if the Analytic of Principles yields only indeterminate principles, then the Deduction seems to accomplish less than one hoped for—less than a demonstration of the objective reality of the categories, their applicability to determinate, sensuously given objects.

In the Second Analogy, Kant argues that the possibility of judging that some successions of perceptions are not subjective but objective—that they express, not just events in the mental life of the subject, but events in the careers of objects—depends on the assumed principle that every event presupposes something from which it follows according to a rule. Thus the *a priori* assumption of the principle of causality plays a crucial role: it makes synthetic *a posteriori* judgments of objective succession possible. But Maimon argues that Kant has not shown that, in order to distinguish objective from subjective successions, we actually need to *apply*—or even to be *able* to apply—the concept of causality to given objects. Kant has shown only that we need to assume that every event has some indeterminate cause, but he has not shown that we need to *assign* any determinate cause to any event. Nor has he shown *how* we *could* assign any determinate cause. Maimon is prepared to endorse some version of Kant's argument and even to argue that the mere perception of *subjective* succession presupposes a version of the principle of causality.⁸⁷ But he does not think that Kant's

Maimon's interpretation is an example of form IA, whereas the form of argument recommended in the Kantian objection considered here is Guyer's IB: "Judgments about empirical objects are possible, and although these do not themselves *assert* any claims to *a priori* knowledge, they do *presuppose a priori* knowledge." So it is noteworthy that Guyer (1987), 121–124, argues that some versions of IB collapse into IA.

87. This strengthening of the Second Analogy seems licensed by the Refutation of Idealism.

argument shows either the necessity or the possibility of determinate applications of the principle in causal judgments.

Maimon's point is of great importance and has only recently attracted the attention of interpreters of Kant's Second Analogy, who seem unaware that Maimon anticipated them.⁸⁸ But the extent to which it counts against Kant is unclear because it is a point of which Kant himself—unlike some of his interpreters—is fully aware. Thus Kant says, "there is an order among our representations, in which the present one (insofar as it has come to be) points to some preceding state as a correlate, to be sure still undetermined, of this event that is given, which is, however, determinately related to the latter, as its consequence, and necessarily connected with it in the temporal series."⁸⁹

Kant is no less explicit in his statement that determinate causal judgments require determinate experiences, not the causal principle alone: "Now how in general anything can be altered, how it is possible that upon a state in one point of time an opposite one may follow in the next—of these we have *a priori* not the least concept. For this acquaintance with actual forces is required, which can only be given empirically, e.g., acquaintance with moving forces, or what comes to the same thing, with certain successive appearances (as motions) which indicate such forces."⁹⁰ But this is mysterious, since Kant insists on the impossibility of arriving at any genuinely causal judgment by induction from experiences. As Michael Friedman has emphasized, Kant's *full* story about how we arrive at determinate causal judgments requires not only the Analytic of Principles, but

For Kant argues there that consciousness of myself as determined in time, which presumably involves the ability to judge the temporal order of subjective states, requires perception of some permanent. As perception of something subject to objective alterations, perception of some permanent must be the kind of perception shown in the Second Analogy to presuppose the causal principle. However, Maimon's version of the Principle of Causality differs from Kant's and depends on Maimon's claim that the natural-scientific conception of causality is a conception of continuity. See Bergmann (1967), 127–137.

88. See Buchdahl (1969), 649–650. One may accept the idea that the Second Analogy argues only for an indeterminate version of the causal principle without accepting Buchdahl's controversial claim that it is arguing only for the principle that every event has some cause, not for the principle that every event of the same type has a cause of the same type. For criticism of Buchdahl's claim, see Friedman (1992b). Allison (1996), defending his version of the Buchdahl interpretation against Friedman, in effect concedes that the principle at stake is that every event of the same type has a cause of the same type.

89. Kant (1900–), KrV, A198–9/B244.

90. Kant (1900–), KrV, A207/B252.

also the account of the mathematization of appearances in Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*.⁹¹

In Kant's own words: "a separate metaphysics of corporeal nature does excellent and indispensable service to *general* metaphysics, insofar as the former furnishes examples (instances in *concreto*) in which to realize the concepts and propositions of the latter (properly transcendental philosophy), that is, to provide a mere form of thought with sense and meaning."⁹² So Kant concedes Maimon's claim that the result, not only of the Transcendental Deduction, but also of the Analytic of Principles, is nothing more than categorial principles that are necessary conditions of possible experience, but only as "mere forms of thought," without determinate "realizations." But he also promises to make up for this merely formal result in his account of the metaphysical foundations of mathematical physics.

✧ Maimon's assessment of Kant's ability to fulfill this promise must depend on his misunderstanding of Kantian dualism as involving a real distinction between sensibility and understanding. For it is hard to see how a position committed to such a real distinction can bridge the gap between intellectual form and sensibly given matter. Nevertheless, even if Maimon's misunderstanding is set aside, he has still raised difficulties for Kant. First, Kant presupposes that Newtonian physics is genuine science, for which no argument is given. Now Kant maintains that "in every special doctrine of nature only so much science proper can be found as there is mathematics in it."⁹³ Consequently, he could show that Newtonian physics is genuine science only by showing the genuineness of the Newtonian mathematization of the sensuously given. Maimon raises serious questions about whether this could be done.⁹⁴ But, second, even if it *could* be done, there would still be a major problem, by Kant's own lights. For Kant's view is that biology can never become a genuine natural science, since it can never attain the

91. Friedman (1992a), 136–164; Friedman (1992b). As Friedman emphasizes in (1992a), 165–210, the task of the Phenomenology chapter of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* is to transform "appearance," which Friedman identifies with the *Prolegomena*'s judgments of perception, into genuine "experience." See Kant (1900–), MAN, 4: 555; Friedman (1992a), 142, 144, 169, 184–185.

92. Kant (1900–), MAN, 4: 478.

93. Kant (1900–), MAN, 4: 470.

94. See Freudenthal's important paper in Freudenthal (2004) on Maimon's criticism of Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*.

level of mathematization found in Newtonian physics.⁹⁵ It would seem, then, that on Kant's view our knowledge-claims about many natural phenomena are not on the road to science, and thus either lack adequate grounding or are at least subject to reasonable doubt. This is a significant form of post-Kantian skepticism.

Indeed, the situation is even worse than I have so far suggested. Kant's view seems to be that everyday knowledge-claims are protected against skepticism by the *Factum* of mathematical and natural science, together with the thesis that everyday and scientific knowledge-claims share the same constitutive principles. This might be convincing if it could be shown that the constitutive principles that ground scientific knowledge-claims could in principle also ground everyday knowledge-claims or, perhaps, scientific versions of everyday knowledge-claims. But in fact this cannot be shown. After all, human beings are both organisms and agents, with natural and moral ends, and the concepts we apply to everyday objects are typically formed within teleological ways of thinking. If, in Kant's view, there is no hope of biology becoming genuine science and being grounded in constitutive principles, because biology is irreducibly teleological, then there must also be no hope of everyday knowledge-claims becoming scientific knowledge-claims. Hence there is no hope of grounding those claims in constitutive principles. Kant's transcendental questions, when raised about *everyday* judgments of experience, turn out to be skeptical after all. When hope vanishes, Humean despair returns.

Maimon's skepticism is a coin with two sides. On one side, there is the anxiety that, even if one succeeded in the Kantian endeavor of tracing the *a priori* conditions of knowledge, those conditions would be entirely *formal* without application to the empirical world and without grounding any of our actual practices of judgment except for mathematics, in which form immediately constitutes object. On the other side, there is the anxiety that, in the absence of such a grounding, the reasons we ordinarily give ourselves and each other are not genuine justifications at all—the anxiety that what we take to be rational relations are merely *psychological* and are to be explained within the empirical science of human psychology. With respect to philosophy, Maimon's skepticism takes the form of what might be called *empty formalism*. With respect to much of our supposed knowledge of

95. Kant (1900–), MAN, 4: 544. See also Kant (1900–), KU, 5: 400. Here I have been greatly helped by conversations with Michael Friedman. See Friedman (2001).

nature, as well as our ordinary claims about ourselves and others, it takes the form of what might be called *psychologism*. German idealists are addressing the first aspect of Maimon's skepticism when they undertake to show that their philosophical thinking is real, not merely formal. They are addressing the second side when they undertake to show that reason is actual in nature, in the self and in society.

3.7

Maimon sometimes puts his skepticism in the form of an antinomy. In this stronger form, doubt pertains, not merely to whether experience is *actual*, but to whether it is so much as *possible*. Thus, in his article on truth, reprinted in the *Philosophische Wörterbuch* of 1791, Maimon sketches what he calls

- 3. a general antinomy of thinking as such. For thinking as such consists in relating a form (rule of the understanding) to a matter (the given subsumed under it). Without matter one can never attain consciousness of the form, consequently the matter is a necessary condition of thinking—that is, for real thinking of a form or rule of the understanding, a matter to which it relates must necessarily be given; however, on the other hand, completeness in thinking of an object requires that nothing be given therein, rather that everything should be thought.⁹⁶

In the passage Maimon speaks not of experience but of “thinking as such.” But what he means is, I think, something very like what Kant means by “experience.” For Maimon, thinking is not merely conjoining concepts, or even conjoining concepts and objects, in a grammatically permissible way and without contradiction. To think is to make things intelligible. An arbitrary thought, which predicates a concept of an object without exhibiting any reason for the predication, is not a genuine thought at all.⁹⁷ For a genuine thought would make some actual thing intelligible and would exhibit the conceptual structure of actuality by grounding what is actual in rational principles. A genuine thought would be what Kant calls a synthetic *a priori* judgment.⁹⁸ It would be a judgment of experience.

96. Maimon (2000a), PhW, 3: 186.

97. Maimon (2000a), Logik, 5: 24: “Arbitrary thought has no ground at all, and is therefore no thought at all.”

98. However, Maimon uses these terms in his own way, whose explanation would be out of place here.

Transcendental investigation of the human condition leads Maimon to the conclusion that experience necessarily presupposes the simultaneous satisfaction of two incompatible demands. On the one hand, experience involves the subsumption of sensibly given matter under intellectual form. Ideally, an object is completely experienced when the form immediately constitutes the object. Only then can the experience in question be completely grounded in the absolute. Maimon thinks that this occurs in pure mathematical construction, which is entirely independent of sensible intuition. However, we humans can become aware of forms only through engagement with what is immediately given in sensible intuition. So experience is both independent of, and dependent upon, sensible intuition.

Put in this way, it is clear that Maimon's skepticism belongs to the family that Jacobi calls nihilism. For Maimon regards genuine knowledge as incompatible with the immediacy of the given, though not with the immediacy of constructive constitution.

Suppose it has been shown that both object-constituting form and immediate givenness are necessary conditions for the possibility of experience. One Kantian response to the antinomy would be to suggest that the necessity for object-constituting form be granted only regulative status, as the ideal to which our knowledge-claims should increasingly approximate. In fact, this is Maimon's response. He thinks that only mathematical judgments are of the ideal sort. Indeed, not all mathematical judgments are *purely* of this sort. Thus, for example, geometrical theorems, proven by construction in sensible intuition, are *impure* because we understand only *that* the form of our sensing immediately constitutes its object, but not *why* it does. We need, Maimon thinks, to free mathematical construction from its dependence on intuition, to form concepts enabling us to grasp more fully what we now grasp only intuitively.⁹⁹ This is a gradual process that goes on indefinitely: first we grasp an object intuitively, without grasping conceptually why it is as it is; then we form appropriate concepts that enable us to construct the object. Thus the given, though initially necessary, is eliminated, our grasp of objects approximates to experience, and our finite understanding approximates to the divine, infinite understanding.

Although profoundly impressed by Maimon, and taking his response as a model for their own, the German idealists take a different route. According to Kant, it will be recalled, there can be no science without math-

99. See Buzaglo (2002), especially Chapter 3.

ematization. This is because Kant holds that a science must relate *a priori* to its objects. Consequently, he says, not only *a priori* concepts are required, for "in order to cognize the possibility of determinate natural things, and thus to cognize them *a priori*, it is still required that the *intuition* corresponding to the concept be given *a priori*, that is, that the concept be constructed."¹⁰⁰ Kant also maintains that all construction is mathematical and that all mathematical construction is in pure sensible intuition. Here Maimon and the German idealists part ways with Kant and with each other. All agree that science requires construction of *a priori* concepts, in which form immediately constitutes its object. However, whereas Maimon wants to free mathematical construction from its dependence on intuition, the German idealists want to free construction in intuition from its restriction to mathematics.

For Fichte, a nonmathematical *a priori* intuition may be found, above all, in moral consciousness of myself as autonomous.¹⁰¹ It is difficult to see how this conception of constitutive knowledge can extend beyond the teleological realm of human agency to the teleological realm of organic nature, Fichte himself is inclined to think that no such extension is possible, and hence that natural science, although it is a human endeavor grounded in philosophy's absolute first principle, must remain mechanistic. For Schelling and the early Hegel, a nonmathematical *a priori* intuition may also be found in perceptions of purposiveness thus in perceptions of both organisms and works of art. Hence they seek to develop a conception of constitutive knowledge that can be operative within a nonmechanistic natural science.

3.8

Strikingly, Hegel's dialectical method incorporates all of the forms of post-Kantian skepticisms discussed in this chapter. This is already clear in his early essay on skepticism, in which he rejects Schulze's account of skepticism as dogmatic. There Hegel says, first, that Plato's *Parmenides* is the

100. Kant (1900–), MAN, 4: 470. See Hatfield (1992), 220: "he [i.e., Kant] seems to rely on his general doctrine that mathematical concepts must be constructed in intuition. From this doctrine it does not, however, follow immediately that any constructed concept must be mathematical. The doctrine only tells us that mathematics requires *a priori* construction, not that all *a priori* constructions are mathematical."

101. See 301–321, 338–354 below.

most "perfect and self-sustaining document and system of genuine skepticism," because it "is not concerned with doubting these truths of the understanding . . . rather it is intent on the complete denial of all truth to this sort of cognition." Because it "destroys" the kind of knowledge in question, it "is itself the negative side of the cognition of the Absolute, and directly presupposes Reason as its positive side."¹⁰² In other words, nihilism is the negative aspect of philosophy, and the most perfect skepticism is nihilism abstracted from philosophy's positive aspect. Here is Hegel's inheritance of Jacobi.

Second, Hegel says that this destruction occurs when an attempt is made to express the absolute by means of a "merely formal" proposition, which leads directly to antinomy:

Thus the principle of skepticism: "against every argument there is an equal one on the other side" comes on the scene at its full strength. . . . To say that a proposition is merely formal, means for Reason, that it is posited alone and on its own account, without the equal affirmation of the contradictory that is opposed to it; and just for that reason it is false.¹⁰³

Hegel illustrates his point with the first definition of Spinoza's *Ethics*. The suggestion is that insofar as one tries to understand Spinoza's definition of "cause of itself" in abstraction from the totality of which the absolute is the first principle, one inevitably finds that one can think only of a mere form that cannot be applied to any object. For one seeks to apply the form in question to objects within the totality, among which the absolute is not to be found. The very attempt to think of the absolute as a member of the totality leads to contradictions, as the Third Antinomy shows. Here, however, Hegel is inheriting not only Kant's discussion of antinomies, along with Jacobi's Spinozist response to the Third Antinomy, but also Maimon's ideas that *a priori* conditions are threatened by mere empty formality, and that philosophy as such may be seen as responsive to a general antinomy. Hegel adds that this nihilistic skepticism is properly directed against dogmatism, whose essence is "that it posits something finite, something burdened with an opposition (e.g., pure Subject, or pure Object, or in dualism the duality as opposed to the identity) as the Absolute."¹⁰⁴ So it is properly

102. Hegel (1970), VSP, 2: 228.

103. Hegel (1970), VSP, 2: 230.

104. Hegel (1970), VSP, 2: 245.

directed, in the first place, against “the dogmatism of ordinary consciousness” and, in the second, against philosophy perverted into dogmatism, but not against philosophy properly speaking. It is when skepticism targets this second, pseudo-philosophical dogmatism that the Agrippan trilemma plays a central role.¹⁰⁵

In this early essay, written during Hegel’s alliance with Schelling, this skepticism—nihilism, exhibition as mere form, and demonstration of antinomies—remains *only* the negative side of the cognition of the absolute that is philosophy properly speaking, while the positive side involves transcendental or speculative intuition. Hegel’s break with Schelling involves the idea of what, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he calls “thoroughgoing skepticism”: the idea that the skeptical destruction of dogmatism, taken to its ultimate, can also constitute the positive content of philosophy, through what he calls “determinate negation,” without any need for intuition.¹⁰⁶ Thus Hegel’s dialectical logic may be seen to emerge from an identification of the post-Kantian skepticisms discussed in this chapter with nothing less than logic itself, or with the self-expression of the absolute.

To a Kantian, the emergence of post-Kantian skepticisms must seem perverse. Yet, for all that, their emergence should not be surprising. Elicitation of more radical forms of skepticism is a risk that transcendental philosophy cannot help but run. For transcendental philosophy, as practiced by Kant, aims not to refute skepticism but to domesticate it: to turn skeptical doubts into the founding questions of a philosophical science within which the intellect can live in peace. And the anxiety of skepticism is alleviated, for Kant, because of the established facts of mathematical and natural science. If there are grounds for anxiety about those putative facts, or about the relevance of those putative facts to everyday practices of judgment, then skepticism is bound to reemerge, shedding any domestic habits it may have acquired. And if transcendental philosophy has succeeded in exposing conditions for the possibility of *experience* that are at the same time conditions for the possibility of *objects* of experience, then the newly emergent skepticism will now concern the very possibility of experience, or the very possibility of there being any objects to experience, or the very possibility of being an experiencing subject.

105. See Hegel (1970), VSP, 2: 243–246.

106. See Chapter 6.

3.9

Three points of contrast between Kant and the German idealists emerge from the discussion in this chapter. First, skepticism is for Kant an academic or—in his terminology—a *scholastic* problem. It can trouble you only if and when you philosophize professionally, but not when you lead your everyday life, and not at all if you do not philosophize. For the skepticism in question arises through a conflict between physical views about the individuation and interaction of objects and the metaphysical demand for entities individuated through their absolutely intrinsic properties. No argument has been given that either the physical views or the metaphysical demand arise within everyday life. Without some such argument, it seems either that the conflict does not impact everyday life at all, or at most that the conflict casts doubt on fundamental presuppositions of everyday life that come to light only upon philosophical investigation. Either way, those who are not professional philosophers are entitled to go on living their lives as they always have, untroubled by skeptical problems and unaffected by their solutions.

For the German idealists, however, skepticism is a *lived* problem, or at least one that affects one's life. Following Jacobi, they think that, in all the forms philosophy takes *prior* to the eventual construction of the German idealist system—including Kant's—it either cannot account for, or it actually annihilates those immediacies that are essential to everyday life. The more rigorous the philosophy, the more thoroughgoing and overt is the incompatibility or annihilation. Nihilism destroys the humanity in the human being. The results range from the lowliness of "those who, as a result of spiritual servitude, have lost their own selves and, along with this loss of themselves, have lost any feeling for their own conviction, as well as any belief in the conviction of others"¹⁰⁷ to the sublime nobility of Spinoza's attempt to fulfill what he takes to be reason's command: "Annihilate thyself! . . . Lose yourself in the absolute."¹⁰⁸

The post-Kantian skepticisms to which German idealism responds are justly called *neo-Humean*. But there are some important differences between

107. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 185.

108. Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1, 315–316. On the question whether any dogmatist, even Spinoza, could truly live his system, see Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1, 305; Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 263–265.

neo-Humean skepticism and Hume's own views. Like Jacobi and Maimon, Hume thinks that philosophical scrutiny leads inexorably to an unmitigated skepticism about everyday beliefs. But unlike Jacobi and Maimon, Hume regards reason as the impotent slave of the passions and of custom or habit. Consequently, although it is true that, when he takes an "intense view" of the contradictions and imperfections in human reason, he has no alternative but skeptical doubt about our ability to give justifications and suspension of all judgment, nevertheless, as soon as he leaves his closet and returns to the "common affairs of life," he is once more a judgmental creature.¹⁰⁹ For his everyday judgments and beliefs do not depend on reason and are therefore not annihilated by an unmitigated skepticism that is inescapable *in theory* but unlivable *in practice*.

On another point, Maimon is closer to Hume than Jacobi. For Hume thinks that philosophical skepticism has a salutary effect on one's everyday life. Liberated from the illusion that we form beliefs because of reasons, rather than because of the force and vivacity of the beliefs, we will be less inclined than before to enthusiasm and fanaticism. Similarly, Maimon regards skepticism about everyday beliefs and psychological accounts of belief-formation—especially of the formation of beliefs in supernatural phenomena—as part of an Enlightenment program that, for him, is rooted in Maimonides and in a tradition of naturalistic interpretation of Maimonides. In contrast, although Jacobi traces his own notion of faith back to Hume, he wants to uncover the immediate character of everyday justification, not to show that everyday belief-formation is a psychological process to be studied within a branch of natural science. To be sure, Jacobi is not the anti-Enlightenment irrationalist he is reputed to be. He wants to abandon philosophical misconceptions of reason, not to abandon reason itself, and he is opposed to the Berlin Enlightenment which he regards as wanting to tyrannize with its philosophically formed views, but not to every strand of Enlightenment thought. Still, Jacobi allies himself with figures whom Maimon and Hume would regard as fanatics—figures like Thomas Wizenmann and Johann Georg Hamann—and his emphasis on immediacy can seem to give aid and comfort to fanaticism, rather than to support the Enlightenment campaign against it.

The German idealists agree with Hume that unmitigated skepticism is inescapable—prior, that is, to the construction of the system—but, like

109. See Hume (2000), section 1.4.7., 175ff.

Jacobi and Maimon, they do not find that this skepticism loses its power when they leave their closets. Thus German idealism must assume the burden not only of responding to a skepticism whose full force has been brought out by Spinoza, Hume, and Kant, but also of healing everyday life, returning to it an immediacy that has been destroyed. In this respect, the German idealists are closer to Jacobi than to Maimon and Hume. For them, the psychologization of the everyday is a descent into the abyss, not a sign of progress. However, differing decisively from Jacobi, they think that the underlying problems lie in *philosophy as it has been practiced so far*, not in philosophy as such.

The second point of contrast follows from the first. Whereas Kant's conception of empirical reality is oriented by natural science, in particular by Newtonian physics, the German idealists' conceptions are oriented by everyday experience. This is not to say either that Kant intends only to specify the necessary conditions for the possibility of science or that the German idealists intend only to ground everyday life. Kant's categories are intended to specify the conditions for the possibility of *both* natural science *and* everyday practices of judgment. But natural science is doubly privileged for him. It is privileged, first, because what secures Kant against skeptical despair is the *Factum* or *Tatsache* of science, not of common sense. And it is also privileged because, to the end of his life, Kant is occupied primarily with the task of connecting the categorial principles with the principles underlying physics. By comparison, he seems quite uninterested in what should be the parallel project of connecting the categorial principles with the principles underlying ordinary practices of judgment. These two privileges are connected: because the *Factum* of science dispels skeptical despair, it is for that *Factum* that an adequate transcendental philosophy—one that is not to be merely formal and hypothetical—must account, above all.

In contrast, for the German idealists, the *success* of modern physics has only made their nihilistic effects *worse*. To account for everyday life—that is, for an everyday life that deserves the name, a life of immediacy, saved from nihilism—is the most urgent task. The *Factum* of Newtonian science offers no philosophical help because it is part of the problem. And the *Factum* of everyday practices offers no philosophical help against skepticism because it is precisely that which is under skeptical attack, that whose inability to repel nihilism makes the German idealist project seem so pressing.¹¹⁰

110. In Chapters 4 and 5, I consider whether any *Factum* can offer philosophical help.

Although the redemption of the everyday must be the first order of business, this does not mean that natural science is to be neglected. By providing an account of how everyday life can *both* employ ground-consequence relations that are subject to the Agrippan trilemma *and* be grounded in the absolute, the German idealist system seeks to account not only for our rational relations to ourselves and to each other, but also for our rational relations to nature. It will thereby ground the possibility of natural science, although the identification of that science with Newtonian physics is not assured in advance, as it is for Kant. Indeed, Schelling and Hegel actively encourage and even engage in non-Newtonian physics.

A third point of contrast emerges when one considers Kant's view that skepticism is not merely a vexing problem, for which a solution must be sought. It is a necessary stage in the development of humankind, a stage without which Kant's revolution, and so the final achievement of scientific philosophy, would be impossible. For Kant, both skepticism and the revolution whereby it is domesticated by transcendental philosophy should henceforth be things of the past, whose present relevance is, one may say, *doctrinal*. That is, they must be *taught* to students, who will not understand transcendental philosophy if they do not grasp Humean skepticism and the Kantian revolution, which has occurred, once and for all. For the German idealists, however, skepticism and the revolution it makes possible are not only doctrinal. They must not merely be understood, they must be *undergone*. Each must see his or her everyday life as threatened by nihilism, as in some degree annihilated. And each must be transformed in revolution.

Revolutions, as we have learned from Thomas Kuhn, involve peculiar difficulties of communication.¹¹¹ Revolutionary texts are compelled either to use old terms in new ways or to coin new terms. In either case, they are bound to be read as if they were prerevolutionary texts that say something unoriginal, something monstrous, or nothing that makes any sense. All three responses are encountered by Kant's critical philosophy, with its revolutionary conceptions of transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Still, Kant's hope is to find a postrevolutionary audience, made up of philosophers at home in the dualism of the transcendental and the empirical, masters of the ambiguities of Kantian dualism. At the very least, Kant can hope to find an audience ripe for revolution, readers familiar with the *Factum* of science, who can be taught to see the implications of Humean skepticism and the point of Kant's transcendental project. In contrast,

111. See Kuhn (1962).

German idealists can never hope for a postrevolutionary audience. Their texts must always call their readers to revolution and must always risk misunderstanding by speaking across a revolutionary divide. An audience ripe for their revolution will be an audience already aware of its own annihilation. Whether a reader's sense that she herself is threatened by annihilation—or even that she herself undergoes annihilation—will be sufficient for the comprehension of German idealist texts and for the salvation they purport to offer must remain an open question.

In this chapter, I have presented post-Kantian skepticisms as motivations for the German idealist project. It is worth noting, however, that there are contemporary analogues of these skepticisms. For example, what Jacobi calls nihilism has a contemporary analogue in one strand of Stanley Cavell's thinking about skepticism;¹¹² Maimon's rule-following skepticism has a

112. Cavell speaks of "the skeptic as nihilist," of both skepticism and its attempted refutations as participating in an "annihilation" that has already occurred as soon as the philosophical question has been raised, if not before. See Cavell (1998), 89. For an early formulation of skepticism as responding to a "loss of presentness," see Cavell (1976), 322–326; Cavell (1988), 172–174; Cavell (1987), 5–6. Also crucial is the relationship between skepticism and "death-dealing passion." See Cavell (1979), 451–452; Cavell (1988), 55–56; Cavell (1987), 6–7. Furthermore, what is annihilated in or before the philosophical demand for justification is precisely the everyday. See, for example, Cavell (1988), 170–171. Hence no appeal to the everyday—say, to the criteria of our ordinary concepts—can refute skepticism, for once the skeptic's question has been raised, those everyday modes of justification are precisely what have already been lost or repudiated. See, for example, Cavell (1988), 88. Moreover What Cavell calls *acknowledgment*—like what Jacobi calls *faith*—is intended to articulate the ordinary's vulnerability to annihilation. However, Cavell guards against the charge that "in offering an alternative to the human goal of knowing, . . . [the idea of acknowledgment] gives up the claim of philosophy to reason"—just the charge to which Jacobi seems open—by insisting that the idea is proposed, "not as an alternative to knowledge but rather as an interpretation of it." See Cavell (1988), 8. On faith, see Cavell (1979), 242–243; Cavell (1988), 136. On the charge that Jacobi repudiates reason, see Jacobi (1994), 538–590, and Franks (2000), 96, 111 n.5. Finally, Cavell's criticism of Kant's settlement with skepticism bears comparison to Jacobi's. Cavell says that Kant's settlement fails to satisfy because he did not *deduce* the thing in itself (see Cavell, 1972, 106–107n.), or because he deprives appearances of "our sense of externality": "Our sense not of each object's externality to every other, making nature a whole, showing it to be spatial; but their externality to me, making nature a world, showing it to be habitable." See Cavell (1979), 53. Thus Kant seems "to deny that you can experience the world as world, things as things; face to face, as it were, call this the life of things." See Cavell (1988), 53. One might take Cavell to be charging Kant with empirical idealism. Certainly, he regards Kantian appearances as too internal, or as internal in the wrong way. But, as I hope the above quotations suggest, Cavell may more charitably be interpreted as charging Kant with participating in the nihilistic violence of skepticism against the ordinary—in something like the way I have reformulated Jacobi's famous criticism of Kant. With respect to the differences between Cavell and Jacobi, it may suffice here to note that for Cavell—unlike Jacobi—there can be no *salto mortale* from the threat of annihilation, both because the possibility of annihilation can never be decisively

contemporary analogue in the rule-following skepticism that Saul Kripke finds addressed by Ludwig Wittgenstein,¹¹³ and Maimon's idea of a general antinomy has a contemporary analogue, in the thought of John McDowell, who offers an escape from the antinomy that has explicit affinities to Hegel's version of German idealism.¹¹⁴

excluded from human life, but is definitive of it, and because there can be no return to the pre-philosophical everyday.

113. According to Kripke's interpretation, Wittgenstein is responding to "a new form of skepticism" about the ability of rules to determine the judgments in which we take ourselves to be following those rules. See Kripke (1982), 62. As in Maimon's case, mathematical rules are taken to be exemplary. The problem is not merely, "How do I know which rule I mean, hence whether my computation is correct?" See Kripke (1982), 39: "such merely epistemological skepticism is *not* in question." Rather, the problem is "How is it possible to mean one rule rather than another, or how is computation possible at all?" Soon the indeterminacy is argued also to affect generalized nonmathematical rules that constitute the meanings of our words. See Kripke (1982), 19. Consequently, the skeptical problem is, "How can we show *any language* at all (public, private, or what-have-you) to be *possible*?" See Kripke (1982), 62. As Kripke himself notes, "So put, the problem has an obvious Kantian flavor." See Kripke (1982), 62 n.48. An obvious difference is that on Kripke's interpretation, the indeterminacy of rules affects pure mathematics, whereas, for Maimon, the indeterminacy affects only the application of mathematical rules to empirical cases. I do not mean to suggest that transcendental rule following skepticism *must* depend on conceiving the transcendental rules as mathematical or as quasimathematical. But it is noteworthy that some such conception figures centrally in the thinking of both Maimon and Kripke. On Kripke's assimilation of the ordinary to the mathematical, see Cavell (1990), 89–90.

114. McDowell's Locke lectures might have taken the passage from Maimon about a "general antinomy" as a motto. For McDowell (1996), xii–xiii, describes himself as responding to "an antinomy: experience both must . . . and cannot . . . stand in judgment over our attempts to make up our minds about how things are." This passage is from an introduction that was not included in the earlier hardback edition of 1994. On the one hand, experience must stand in judgment because there seems to be no other way to make sense of the idea that "thinking that aims at judgment is answerable to the world—to how things are—for whether or not it is correctly executed." See McDowell (1996), xii. This requirement, which McDowell calls "minimal empiricism," easily expresses itself in various versions of the Myth of the Given: the idea that experience can play its role as ultimate tribunal only if it is unmediated by any judgment or conceptualization. On the other hand, experience so conceived, as a nonconceptual sense impression, cannot play that role. For "thinking that aims at judgment" must also be answerable to reasons, and what is not conceptual cannot be a reason: "In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications." See McDowell (1994), 8. The antinomy to which McDowell is responding is intended to be general, in particular to provide a more adequate expression of the pre-Kantian conflict between empirical realism and empirical idealism over the extent of knowledge. According to McDowell (1996), xiii–xiv: "It is true that modern philosophy is pervaded by apparent problems about knowledge in particular. But I think it is helpful to see those apparent problems as more or less inept expressions of a deeper anxiety—an inchoately felt threat that a way of thinking we find ourselves falling into leaves minds simply out of touch with the rest of reality, not just questionably capable of getting to know about it. A problem about crediting ourselves with knowledge is just one shape, and not the most fundamental, in which that anxiety can make itself felt."

The contemporary philosophers mentioned do not respond to the relevant skepticisms by constructing German idealist systems. They are post-Kantians but not German idealists. This is because anxiety about post-Kantian skepticism explains the *urgency* of the German idealist project for those who undertake it but does not on its own explain *why* they undertake it in the first place. Their specific undertaking is explained by the need they perceive—which I have sought to explain in Chapters 1 and 2—for Derivation Monism and Holistic Monism in any adequate philosophy.

Empirical realism and idealism are conflicting answers to the question whether minds are incapable of knowing the rest of reality, that is, capable of knowing themselves alone—if that question is understood empirically. McDowell is suggesting, in effect, that there is a more fundamental, transcendental sense of the question: are minds out of touch with reality altogether, hence capable of directing thought at reality at all? And it is easy to see that the antinomy in question is in some sense transcendental, without an investigation of McDowell's complex relationship to Kant that is out of place here. For the antinomy expresses itself as the question, "How is thinking that aims at judgment possible?," "whose felt urgency derives from a frame of mind that, if explicitly thought through, would supply materials for an argument that . . . [thinking that aims at judgment] is impossible." See McDowell (1996), xxiii. Furthermore, McDowell all but calls the anxiety to which he is responding "skepticism" when he contrasts "the shallow scepticism" that Davidson takes to motivate the Myth of the Given—a skepticism "in which, taking it for granted that one has a body of beliefs, one worries about their credentials"—with the "deeper motivation" that the Myth has in McDowell's view: "the thought that if spontaneity is not subject to rational constraint from the outside . . . then we cannot make it intelligible to ourselves how exercises of spontaneity can represent the world at all." See McDowell (1994), 17. The anxiety that some necessary condition for the possibility of "thinking that aims at judgment" may not be satisfiable—say, because it conflicts it with another equally necessary condition—seems to merit the characterization: a deeper, post-Kantian skepticism. As a final point of analogy, McDowell's intention is neither to dismiss nor to refute skepticism, but to escape from its anxiety while acknowledging its deep source: "The aim here is not to answer sceptical questions, but to begin to see how it might be intellectually respectable to ignore them, to treat them as unreal, in the way that common sense has always wanted to." See McDowell (1994), 113. As he explains, once it becomes clear that skeptical questions express an underlying conflict between two equally necessary conditions of possibility, answering them ceases to be an option: "we need to exorcize the questions rather than set about answering them." See McDowell (1996), xxii–xxiv. The exorcism involves rethinking fundamental presuppositions that render the conditions incapable of simultaneous satisfaction. For McDowell, it is primarily the distinction between the space of reasons and nature that must be rethought. But it is easy to apply an abstract description of McDowell's procedure to Fichte's rethinking of the theoretical/practical distinction.

Post-Kantian Transcendental Arguments

By “transcendental arguments” I mean arguments that start from some putatively undeniable facet of our experience in order to conclude that our experience must have certain features or be of a certain type, for otherwise this undeniable facet could not be.

—Taylor (1972), 151

No continuous advance from the sensible to the supersensible realm is possible. . . . It is, however, quite possible to descend from the supersensible to the sensible world and to view the latter in the light of and for the sake of the former. . . . If, however, what one is trying to do is to raise to clear consciousness, to develop, and to animate certain concepts that one already assumes to be present, then one must pursue a different path, *one which, for the most part, follows a direction directly opposite to the path of transcendental deduction.*

—Fichte (1964), EAA; 1/6:413

4.1

I now turn my attention from the *problems* motivating the German idealist program to the *methods* it employs.

In recent decades, much attention has been paid to the idea that Kant employs a distinctive method—the method of *transcendental argumentation*¹—which continues to have contemporary philosophical promise, an

1. For recent discussion, see the contributions to Stern (1999), which includes an extensive bibliography, and Stern (2000). As David Bell has pointed out, Kant himself uses the term *transcendental argument* to signify a species of argument that he wishes to avoid. See B655 and also B617. It is well-known that Austin uses the term in what seems to be a contemporary way in his 1939 paper, “Are There *A Priori* Concepts?,” reprinted in Austin (1979). Hookway (1999), 180, n.8, notes that C. S. Peirce also uses the term in such a way in an unfinished text written in 1902. Neither Austin nor Peirce seems conscious of any terminological innovation, so it is likely that the usage has a history in philosophical conversation, if not in published texts.

idea notably due to Strawson.² The same method, it is sometimes said, is employed by the German idealists.³

It is certainly fruitful to compare German idealist methods of argumentation with those employed by Kant and by contemporary analytic philosophers, among others. However, it is a mistake to examine German idealist methods in abstraction from the problems they are designed to address. To do so is to run at least three risks. First, there is the danger of reading Kant and the German idealists as if they were contemporary analytic philosophers.⁴ This is not just the danger of inaccurate history. For philosophy's interest in its history is not solely historical. In the attempt to understand an alien past by overcoming the present, we can discover not only new answers to familiar questions but also new possibilities for philosophical questioning. Anachronism precludes such discoveries. As we shall see, a method analogous to contemporary trends in transcendental argument is available in the 1790s, but it is rejected by the German idealists because it cannot address the problems with which they are concerned.⁵

Second, there is the risk of ignoring the complex relationship between the problems motivating Kant and the problems motivating German idealists, which I have taken pains to articulate in the previous three chapters.⁶

Third, there is the pitfall of ignoring significant differences between the

2. The idea arises largely from the intimate connection between Strawson's contemporary practice of descriptive metaphysics and his powerful reading of Kant. See Strawson (1959), (1966). Recent and much-discussed arguments often called transcendental are given by Tyler Burge (1979), (1982), (1986a), and (1986b); Davidson (1984) and (1986); and Putnam (1981). For a useful discussion of differences and similarities between contemporary transcendental arguments and Descartes' antiskeptical strategy, see Broughton (2002).

3. While Taylor (1972) argues only that the first three chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology* may be read as transcendental arguments, Neuhauser (1986) extends this interpretive strategy to the fourth chapter. Neuhauser (1990) maintains that Fichte may also be understood as engaging in transcendental argument in his *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*. See also Stern (1996).

4. See Bell (1999) for a useful discussion of ways in which contemporary naturalism has distorted our understanding of transcendental argumentation and has led to the misidentification of Kant's Refutation of Idealism as a transcendental argument, indeed, as the paradigmatic transcendental argument.

5. Thus Taylor (1972), 151, underestimates the range of possibilities and overestimates similarities between German idealism and contemporary uses of transcendental argumentation to refute skepticism, when he begins to interpret Hegel with the stipulation, "By 'transcendental argument' I mean arguments that start from some putatively undeniable facet of our experience in order to conclude that this experience must have certain features or be of a certain type, for otherwise this undeniable facet could not be."

6. Thus, caution is called for when, for example, Neuhauser (1990), 34, suggests that "the proof Fichte proposes [in his 1793 review of Gebhardt] is intended as a transcendental argument similar to Kant's mode of argumentation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*."

German idealists themselves. In particular, as I hope to show in this chapter, it is a mistake to assume that all German idealists share the methodological views presupposed by the pioneering German idealist system: the system developed by Reinhold in 1789–1790.⁷ To be sure, both Fichte and Schelling are not simply Kantians, but rather Reinholdians, before they develop their own philosophical voices. Reinhold's influence is truly massive, which is one reason for a recent revival of interest in his long neglected works. However, both Fichte and Schelling develop their voices precisely through criticism, not only of the details of Reinhold's system—notably, his formulation of the system's first principle, as commentators have noted—but also of some of its main methodological presuppositions. To be still more specific, Reinhold's system turns out to be incompatible on multiple levels with the distinction between the transcendental and the empirical that is central to Kantian dualism, which the German idealists continue to see as an important part of an adequate response to the Agrippan, Leibnizian, and Humean/Newtonian problems motivating Kant himself. Reinhold also fails to grasp the depth of the challenges posed by Spinozism, Jacobian nihilism, and Maimonian skepticism. Consequently, German idealist methods of argumentation should be seen as an attempt to improve on Reinhold's failed attempt to meet the requirements of Derivation Monism and Holistic Monism. The goal is not only to meet those requirements, but also, at the same time, to maintain some version of Kantian dualism while responding to post-Kantian skepticism.

4.2

Suppose that one is responding to the problems articulated in the last three chapters. What constraints do these problems impose on the transcendental arguments one employs? If we are to answer this question, we must first have a preliminary grasp of what transcendental arguments are, especially of those aspects of transcendental argumentation that are subject to constraint.

Since I want to establish some sense of how diverse transcendental ar-

7. I agree with Ameriks (2000a), both that it is important to study Reinhold's project if we are to understand German idealism and that Reinhold gets Kant seriously wrong. But I do not think that Reinhold's project is simply a model for later German idealists, as Ameriks sometimes seems to suggest. Although Reinhold is the source of many German idealist ideas and methods, his execution of the project serves for Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel largely as an example of how *not* to carry it out.

guments can be, and of the choices one must make depending on the problems one seeks to address, an exclusionary definition would be counterproductive. Instead, I will say, with deliberate generality, that anything that might helpfully be called a transcendental argument should issue in some *conditional* to the effect that some *conditioned* would be impossible, if not for some *condition*. This enables me to thematize three dimensions of transcendental argumentation within which variety is to be found, choices must be made, and overly hasty assumptions of methodological identity must be avoided. The three dimensions are: the character of the conditioned, the character of the condition, and the character of the conditional.

A. The Character of the Conditioned

In accordance with Chapters 1 and 3, the conditioned, for both Kant and the German idealists, must be the *a priori* conditions of both experience in some cognitive sense and the objects of experience. To avoid anachronism, we should note that, although Strawson, like Kant, speaks of experience, his conception of the task of transcendental arguments is colored by a post-Fregean interest in the intelligibility of *thoughts* and their *linguistic expressions* that should be distinguished from Kantian and German idealist interest in the intelligibility of *things* and their *explanatory roles*. Strawson's interpretation of Kant as proposing possible experience as a principle of *significance* cannot help but distort Kant's own project.⁸ Without the possibility of meaningfully employing the categories beyond possible experience to think the unconditioned, there can be no room for any conception of absolute grounding—hence no room for Kant's lifelong concern with the problematic status of mathematical and natural science, and no room for Kant's project of realizing a conception of absolute grounding within practical philosophy.⁹ There can also be no room for the problems to which the German idealist project is meant to respond.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, there are significant differences between

8. See Rosen (1988).

9. The distinction between logical possibility (the noncontradictoriness of a concept) and real possibility (the connection of a concept to an intuition, through which connection the possibility of instantiations of the concept may be demonstrated) is central to Kant's thought and important for what follows. Recent work on Kant's philosophy of mathematics has done much to clarify this distinction and has put it to good use. See Parsons (1983), 110–149, and Friedman (1992a), Chapters 1 and 2.

Kant and the German idealists regarding the problematic status of the *a priori* conditions of experience, hence regarding the question to which transcendental arguments should provide the answer. For Kant, the question concerns, in the first place, the possibility of experience conceived primarily but not exclusively in a way that is oriented towards mathematical and natural science, and, so conceived, experience may be presupposed as an actual *Factum* in light of the success of Newtonian physics. Although this question would not be possible without a generalization of Humean skepticism about causality to categories in general, it is a question only for professional philosophy, not for everyday life, and one has reason to hope that, since experience is actual, *some* account of its possibility *must* be available. Not so for the German idealists. Under the pressure of the neo-Humean anxieties thematized by Jacobi and Maimon, their conception of the empirical is primarily but not exclusively oriented towards the everyday, and neither everyday nor scientific practices of judgment may be assumed as a *Factum* that gives reason for hope. Both in their conceptualizations of the *a priori* possibility of experience and its objects as the conditioned in their transcendental arguments, and in each step taken in those arguments, the German idealists must work without the safety net of established science. Hence a heady anxiety that can express itself in bravado. Hence, too, the need to work beyond much of the philosophical tradition, for the conditioned must—if one takes Jacobi seriously—somehow thematize precisely those features of the everyday that all previous philosophy has negated or annihilated, not through mere neglect but in virtue of philosophy's very self-understanding.

Another aspect of the conditioned in a transcendental argument is, I claim, that a first-personal possessive always attaches to it, explicitly or implicitly. It is for the possibility of *my*—or *our*—practices that a transcendental argument is supposed to account. The first-personal possessive modifying the conditioned is at once the source of much of transcendental argumentation's promise, and the source of much of the criticism that transcendental arguments attract. For admirers, transcendental arguments are attractive because they explore the philosopher's own capacities, capacities for which she is thought to be in a special, if not infallible, position to speak. For detractors, this very fact is the cause of a narrow parochialism. At best, transcendental arguments can limn *our* conception of reality, but not reality itself; at worst, it merely reflects *your* conception: the limited imagination of a particular philosopher or philosophical generation. As we

shall see, the charge of parochialism, raised against Strawson in the 1960s, has antecedents in the 1790s.

The *range* of the first personal possessive modifying the conditioned may vary significantly. Strawson sometimes suggests that he is interested in the practices of all humans, but this question is underthematized in his work. Kant explicitly distinguishes between the forms of reason that range over *all* rational beings, the forms of discursive understanding that range over *all finite* rational beings, and the forms of sensibility that range specifically over *human* beings. We will have to consider the range of any German idealist argument under consideration, and whether it requires or allows for Kant's threefold distinction.

Another variable is whether the possessive is *singular* or *plural*. The role of the transcendental unity of apperception in the Transcendental Deduction has suggested to some that Kantian experience must be conceived as *mine*, whereas the role of judgments of experience in the *Prolegomena* has suggested to others that Kantian experience should be conceived as *ours*. This issue comes to a fascinating head in the development of Fichte's *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*, which seeks to exploit some important features of first-personal singular self-ascription that have only recently been rediscovered within contemporary analytic philosophy. Hegel's use of the first-person plural in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* may be viewed in part as an attempt to keep what is valuable in Fichte's insight while avoiding some problems to which it gives rise.

B. The Character of the Condition

Both Kant and the German idealists are responding to Agrippan skepticism about grounding, specifically to skepticism about whether the grounding of empirical events and objects, which is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma, is genuine grounding. Consequently, the conditions they seek must be *justificatory*, for they want to show the transcendental *grounding* of the empirical.

Here, too, anachronism must be avoided. For example, Strawson explicitly repudiates any intention of grounding ordinary beliefs through transcendental philosophy, whose role he expresses by the motto "Only connect."¹⁰ It would distort Kant's project, and it would make the German

10. Strawson (1985), 21–23.

idealist relation to Kant invisible, if one were to construe Kant's transcendental arguments as attempting merely to connect, say, practices of judgment to their presuppositions, even to presuppositions that are *indispensable* for those practices or for any practices we could recognize as human. As Kant says in criticism of the appeal to common sense in the Scots and their German followers, Humean skepticism calls into question, not our *need* for the categorial principles that structure our practices of judgment, but the *origin* of those principles. And, as Kant makes clear through his attitude to Hume's own response to Humean skepticism, he hopes for an account of that origin that is not merely psychological but justificatory.

Both Kant and the German idealists are committed to the grounding of the *a priori* possibility of experience and its objects in some *unconditioned* condition. Now, Kant's best known transcendental arguments—such as the Transcendental Deduction and the Refutation of Idealism, which have been the main attractions for contemporary practitioners of transcendental argumentation—do not argue for or from an unconditioned condition. Still some of Kant's less familiar arguments—notably the deduction of freedom, to be discussed in Chapter 5—do instantiate such a pattern. And I have argued in Chapter 1 that some of Kant's own lines of thought suggest the project of constructing an argument exhibiting the grounding of the categories in the idea of an absolutely infinite *ens realissimum*—a project that we can regard the German idealists as taking up. Thus transcendental arguments of interest to German idealists, unlike Kant's best known transcendental arguments, will argue for or from an unconditioned condition.

Two important distinctions emerge from the facts that German idealist transcendental arguments must be justificatory and that they must exhibit unconditioned justification. The first is the distinction between *progressive* and *regressive* transcendental arguments—that is, between arguments that proceed from ground to grounded, and arguments that regress from grounded to ground.¹¹ The second is the distinction between what I will call *heterogeneous* and *homogeneous* transcendental arguments.

11. One might disavow the grounding function of transcendental arguments and yet find room for a distinction between progressive and regressive arguments, if one is committed to a hierarchy of dependence-relations terminating in foundations that are not conceived as grounding the claims or capacities they support. Thus, despite his (1985) disavowal of the goal of "wholesale validation," Strawson sometimes views transcendental arguments as capable of delineating the "foundations" of our conceptual capacities, for example, in (1985), 15, where he appears to endorse Wittgenstein's use of the term *foundations*. Such an endorsement may appear to be in tension with the

As I argued in Chapter 2, Kant's Third Antinomy amounts to an argument that a series of conditioned conditions can have an unconditioned condition only if that condition is heterogeneous to the series. Although Kant thinks that his own version of transcendental idealism, with its commitment to Monadic Individualism at the level of hypothetical necessity, is the only option, there is *prima facie* no reason to exclude the possibility that there are other ways to meet the Heterogeneity Requirement, notably by means of Holistic Monism. In Kant's own opinion, Spinozism fails to meet the Heterogeneity Requirement. But, as we have seen, there is no reason to think that a view committed to Holistic Monism *must* fail if it has an adequately *progressive* account of the absolute. We must distinguish between transcendental arguments that meet the Heterogeneity Requirement in their conception of the unconditioned condition and arguments that do not. The former I shall call *heterogeneous* arguments, the latter *homogeneous*.

One point to be made in this chapter is that only progressive transcendental arguments can be heterogeneous. This will turn out to be a central issue that divides Fichte and Schelling from a broad group more directly influenced by Reinhold, a group that includes such figures as Carl Christian

Humean naturalist's disavowal of grounding. But there may be no tension, if foundational status is constituted by the brute fact of indispensability to humans. To show that a capacity rests upon such foundations would not be to validate the capacity, since the foundations are themselves without ground. On this view, regressive arguments would trace the links from capacities to their foundations, while progressive arguments would trace the implications of the foundations. However, Strawson (1997), 237, seems to reassert a certain grounding role for the foundations, since he criticizes Kant for regarding them as "not capable of further explanation." In apparent conflict with his Humean naturalism once again, Strawson's arguments that the forms of judgment may be derived from the concept of a discursive understanding and that the spatio-temporal forms of intuition may be derived from the concept of sensible intuition bring him closer to the post-Kantian thought that our forms of judgment and intuition are demonstrably the only such forms possible for rational beings. Again, there is perhaps no real conflict, if it remains inexplicable that we humans have a discursive understanding requiring sensible intuition. But the inexplicability remains only if it is possible to be rational beings in some other way, perhaps by having what Kant calls intellectual intuition. Strawson (1997), 239, seems less willing than Kant to place weight on that notion. As Putnam (1998) argues, there are longstanding tensions between Strawson's Humean tendency to criticize skepticism as idle and his Kantian tendency to criticize skepticism as incoherent. Perhaps there are still further tensions between Strawson's Humean and Kantian tendencies to criticize skepticism as idle or incoherent *for us humans*, and his post-Kantian tendency to regard our fundamental capacities as indispensable—hence, to criticize skepticism as either idle or incoherent, depending on what this indispensability amounts to—not only for us but *for all rational beings*.

Erhard Schmid, Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, Johann Benjamin Erhard and Baron Franz Paul von Herbert. The latter group concludes from shortcomings of Reinhold's system that only regressive transcendental arguments are worth pursuing, so that unconditioned justification is unattainable. The former—the German idealists—conclude that, since unconditioned justification is exactly what is needed, only progressive transcendental arguments are worth pursuing.

Those contemporary philosophers who hope for justification from transcendental arguments, and who may therefore make the progressive/regressive distinction, are typically interested only in regressive arguments. For they typically think that a transcendental argument responding to some skeptical doubt about justification would have to *refute* skepticism by arguing from some premise that the skeptic cannot deny to the justification that the skeptic purports to doubt. On this picture, the premise of the transcendental argument should not express the ground in question, for then there would be no hope of beginning with something to which the skeptic must agree. It follows that, if only progressive arguments can be heterogeneous, the premises of those arguments are going to be subject to skeptical doubt, so no refutation of skepticism is to be hoped for. This does not mean, however, that German idealists do not offer skepticism *any* response. For refutation is not the only philosophically interesting mode of response to skepticism.¹²

C. The Character of the Conditional

A conditional expressing the upshot of a transcendental argument makes a claim to *necessity*. But necessity may be variously conceived. I shall distinguish between *analytic* and *synthetic* transcendental arguments. The former invoke conceptual or logical necessity alone, whereas the latter also invoke some species of nonconceptual or extralogical necessity.¹³ Whether Strawsonian transcendental arguments are supposed to be analytic or syn-

12. This has been emphasized by, above all, the work of Stanley Cavell on what he calls "the truth of skepticism." See, for example, Cavell (1976), (1979), (1981), and (1990). See also Rosen (1999), 152.

13. It seems impossible to avoid these terms, although they are used in confusingly different ways. My usage is connected to Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, not to Kant's distinction between analytic (regressive) and synthetic (progressive) methods of proof. See Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 277n. Compare with Bennett (1979).

thetic is unclear.¹⁴ Although Strawson never explicitly invokes synthetic necessity, his arguments can seem to require it. At the same time, diverse varieties of physical and metaphysical necessity, once taboo within analytic philosophy, have been revived in recent decades.

Kant's case is more complex than is often supposed. To be sure, Kant distinguishes philosophy from mathematics on the ground that only mathematics can appeal to a *a priori* intuition, whereas philosophy is limited to concepts alone. This may well seem to imply that Kant's transcendental arguments can invoke only conceptual necessity. Certainly, in both theoretical and practical philosophy, Kant tries to get as much mileage as possible from, say, the concept of a finite rational being. At crucial points, however, such as the Transcendental Aesthetic, the second step of the B-edition Transcendental Deduction and, presumably, every argument in the *Analytic of Principles*, Kant *must* appeal to necessities that pertain to us *qua* specifically *human* beings with specifically human forms of *intuition*. One may say that Kant does not contravene his definition of philosophy because he is dealing not with a *a priori* intuition, but with the *concept* of a *a priori* intuition. But even if this distinction may be made, it would still seem that analysis of the relevant concept shows, by conceptual necessity, that its application involves some sort of nonconceptual necessity.¹⁵

In Chapter 3, I discussed some of Maimon's arguments for the thesis that, even if valid, Kant's transcendental arguments could establish only *hypotheticals*, such as "If experience is possible, then every event follows from some event according to a law," while leaving untouched the question whether experience is actual or, perhaps, even whether experience is possible. But it is generally assumed that transcendental arguments are supposed to establish more than this.

One way in which they might establish affirmative synthetic *a priori* conclusions, such as "Every event *does* follow from some event according to a law," is by employing a synthetic *a posteriori* premise, such as "There is experience," and by proceeding to analyze the concept used in that premise. It is sometimes said that Kant *must* employ only conceptual necessity in his argumentation because his goal is to refute the skeptic who

14. Förster (1989), 9, suggests that many contemporary transcendental arguments are in fact synthetic, including Strawson's. Wilkerson (1976), Chapter 10, tries to develop a synthetic conception of transcendental argument but ultimately admits defeat. Taylor's (1995) conception appears to be synthetic.

15. I am grateful to Michael Rosen for impressing upon me the point that conceptual analysis can reveal nonconceptual necessities.

doubts that synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible, so that it would be obviously begging the question to appeal to synthetic *a priori* necessity in Kant's argument.¹⁶

This is the sole alternative only if it is assumed that Kant intends to refute skepticism, an assumption which I argued against in Chapter 3. In principle, there is another alternative, as recent discussions of Kant's philosophy of geometry show. For the synthetic *a priori* status of geometry has been understood in two ways: either as involving the use of synthetic premises, from which analytically necessary consequences are drawn, or as involving the use of synthetic *a priori* inference, proceeding through a series of constructions to a theorem.¹⁷ Can some of Kant's transcendental arguments be regarded as using some philosophical analogue of construction in *a priori* intuition? Even if this suggestion contravenes Kant's definition of philosophy, it cannot be clear in advance whether the suggestion or the definition should be abandoned. In any event, whether or not the suggestion is fruitful for Kant interpretation, it is taken up by the German idealists when they explore the possibilities of synthetic transcendental argumentation. In this chapter, I will begin to suggest some of the motivation for this exploration.

4.3

Reinhold is unquestionably both the pioneer of post-Kantian Derivation Monism and its most vocal advocate. Only *after* passing through initial Reinholdian stages do Fichte and Schelling develop their own conceptions of the German idealist programme.¹⁸ For this reason, Reinhold's neglected works have recently begun to receive much-deserved attention, and dis-

16. See Walker (1978), 18–23, and Walker (1989), 63. Walker (1978), 14–15, writes that the “claim that we have knowledge or experience (or intelligible thought)” must be synthetic *a priori* because “it is too basic to be an ordinary empirical claim and yet it is not analytic.” But here, because he thinks Kant must intend to refute skepticism, Walker takes the claimed knowledge or experience to be so thin that no skeptic could coherently doubt their actuality. As we saw in Chapter 3, Kant's conception of experience is not this thin and, when he does employ a thin premise, in the Refutation of Idealism, he employs it, not against skepticism, but rather against empirical idealism. Niethammer's position, to be discussed below, is that the claim that we have experience—presumably in a thick enough sense to yield categorical principles as necessary conditions—is synthetic *a posteriori*.

17. See Friedman (1992a).

18. Fichte's early Reinholdianism is well-known. Schelling's has come to light only recently, in his student essay on Plato's *Timaeus*. The title of another student essay is clearly Reinholdian. See Baum (2000).

cussions of the fundamental insights of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel now typically discuss significant ways in which those insights are attained through criticism of Reinhold's formulations—notably, of his proposed first principle, the Principle of Consciousness—and even ways in which revisions of Reinhold's formulations are suggested by other remarks made by Reinhold himself.¹⁹

However, I do not think that sufficient attention has been paid to the problems encountered by Reinhold's methodology and to the important role played in the development of German idealism by *criticisms* of his conception of transcendental argument. One might gain the mistaken impression from some discussions that Fichte and Schelling revise Reinhold's *formulation of the first principle* of the German idealist system, and then proceed to construct the system *as Reinhold conceives it*. But this would be quite wrong. Indeed, if one does not see that Fichte and Schelling are revising Reinhold's conception of transcendental argument, hence of the construction of the system, then one will misunderstand the import of their criticisms of his first principle.

As is well known, Reinhold changes his position several times—from Catholic to Protestant, from anti-Kantian to Kantian, from Reinholdian to Fichtean, from Fichtean to anti-German idealist, and so on. In broad outline, however his project remains constant throughout these changes. Reinhold strives for an Enlightenment from above, to be initiated by intellectuals acting through publication and pedagogy, and organized in secret societies, such as the Freemasons and the Illuminati, in both of which Reinhold is active.²⁰ It is Reinhold's firm belief that natural rights and duties can only be adequately acknowledged within a society that has reached a consensus on religion and morality—that is, of course, a consensus on *natural* religion and morality, the religion and morality which the Enlightenment regarded as rational.²¹ A social consensus on religion and morality is possible only if intellectuals reach a consensus about philosophy, and a philosophical consensus is in turn possible only if *inter alia* there are no more fruitless disagreements about the meanings of

19. Henrich (1982) sees Fichte's "original insight" as arising through criticism of Reinhold, whereas Henrich (1989) finds this insight anticipated by Reinhold himself. Beiser (2002) sees Reinhold as implicitly anticipating Fichte's conception of the primacy of the practical.

20. On the connections between Reinhold's philosophical, Masonic and Illuminist activity, see Fuchs (1994).

21. Reinhold (1791), *ÜF*, vi; Reinhold (1794), *BBMP*, 2: 95.

words.²² However, until consensus is reached—Reinhold's early Masonic writings seem to suggest—secret societies are necessary to protect and promulgate the truths on which consensus is eventually to be established.²³ For not only are those truths actively attacked by the enemies of Enlightenment, they are also bound to be misunderstood by—or even unintelligible to—the masses, as long as there continues to be disagreement on the meanings of terms. On all this, Reinhold's position seems not to change. What changes is his opinion about which philosophy will provide the basis for a social consensus, and his view about which conditions for consensus demand the most pressing attention, agreement about ideas or agreement about meanings.

In light of this program, it is not surprising that Reinhold tends to address philosophical disputes by mediating between the parties, in the hope of showing that each has part of the truth and of thereby bringing about reconciliation and consensus. In the works with which I am concerned here, Reinhold mediates by finding a *middle-concept*, hitherto unknown to both parties. Indeed, he regards this as the procedure of Jesus, who succeeded in reconciling Jewish religion with Greek morality through the concept of a universal, divine Father of all human beings.²⁴

It is Reinhold's Enlightenment program and, specifically, his commitment to mediation, that gives rise, for a time, to his advocacy of Derivation Monism and to his pioneering version of German idealism. Unfortunately, Reinhold's understanding of the problems posed by Holistic Monism and post-Kantian skepticism is superficial, and his commitment to mediation leads him to undermine Kantian dualism, which Fichte and other German idealists then undertake to save.

Thus, although Reinhold's 1786–1787 *Letters*—credited with making Kant a household name—are written in response to the pantheism controversy, they are based on the superficial view that the central conflict in the controversy is between religious faith and philosophical reason, and that Kant's idea of rational faith in God and immortality is therefore tailor-made to serve as the middle-concept. Of course, such a conflict must trouble anyone who, like Reinhold, thinks that a well-ordered society requires a

22. Without a consensus on principles, philosophy is a mere "thought-game." See Reinhold to Maimon, 1791, in Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 222.

23. On Reinhold's Masonic writings, see Fuchs (1994) and Gliwitsky (1974).

24. Reinhold (1786–1787), BKP, Letter 3, 4–6.

consensus in religion based upon a consensus in philosophy. But there is little evidence that Reinhold sees that Jacobian faith is meant to be the immediate, perceptual conviction of everyday life, not some traditional set of religious beliefs.²⁵ Nor does Reinhold see that Jacobi's conception of the destructive power of philosophy is original and, if taken seriously, demands an original response, a fresh engagement between philosophy and the everyday. For him, the skeptical challenge arises merely from the fact that there are many philosophical positions, each of which can refute the others, but none of which can itself be demonstrated.²⁶ To be sure, Jacobi's conceptions of both faith and nihilism are clarified only *gradually*, and only *after* Reinhold's *Letters*, Reinhold is certainly not alone in missing Jacobi's point, which is originally expressed in some highly misleading ways.²⁷ Perhaps more damningly, Reinhold misses the depth of the issues raised by Spinozism. He is convinced by Jacobi that Spinozism is the most consistent system of dogmatic metaphysics, but he does not explicitly acknowledge—as Kant himself soon does, in the second *Critique*—that this presents any challenge to Kant.²⁸

25. Reinhold notes that Jacobi understands faith as the element of all human activity and knowledge, so that Mendelssohn cannot be right in thinking Jacobi's faith orthodox. See Reinhold (1786–1787), letter 2: 139–140. But it does not seem to occur to Reinhold that what Jacobi calls faith may not be specifically religious.

26. See Reinhold (1786–1787), BKP, letter 1, 112. Reinhold had himself already found and lost conviction in several philosophies, moving, in the course of a decade, from religious supernaturalism to atheism, then to rationalist theism, and then to skepticism. See Reinhold to Nicolai, 1789, cited in Reinhold (1983), 10, n.3. Before reading Kant, he had found no philosophy that could reconcile his heart with his head. See Reinhold to Kant, 12 October, 1787, in Kant (1900–), 10: 498–499; Reinhold (1789), VTV, 51–54.

27. At the end of his Spinoza book, Jacobi approvingly cites Johann Kaspar Lavater, generally considered a religious fanatic for his public attempt to convert Mendelssohn to Christianity. So there was good reason for Mendelssohn and others to assume that Jacobian faith was specifically religious, even Christian, in character. At the same time, there was good reason to think that Jacobi was opposing faith to reason as such, not to a philosophical misconception of reason. So Jacobi was taken for an irrationalist, for example, by Kant, WHD. Jacobi tried to correct Kant's interpretation, for which he blamed Reinhold. See Kant (1900–), 11: 75–77 (To Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 20 August, 1789) and 11: 101–105 (To Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 16 November, 1789). Beiser (1988), 83, describes Jacobi as believing “that we have but two options, a rational nihilism or an irrational faith.” Jacobi's appeal to Hume for the pertinent sense of “faith” was no doubt intended to set his readers on a different path. In the important Supplement VII to the 1789 second edition of *Spinoza*, Jacobi distinguished two senses of “reason.” Only in his final works, however, does he distinguish clearly between the philosophical misconception of reason which he opposes, and which he now calls *understanding*, and the correct conception of reason as faith, which he now calls *reason*. See Jacobi's 1815 Vorrede.

28. Reinhold (1786–1787), BKP, letter 4, 137, remarks that “Spinozism is in the field of metaphysics what Catholicism is in the field of hyperphysics: the most systematic version.” This ob-

Similarly, Reinhold's pioneering version of Derivation Monism—the 1789–1790 philosophy of the elements—is born out of an attempt at mediation. Assuming his position as the first professor of critical or Kantian philosophy, and preparing to teach his first classes at Jena, Reinhold prepares by reading responses to Kant and discovers, to his horror, that the few who have read Kant have misunderstood him and that some proponents of Enlightenment have even attacked Kant as unintelligible.²⁹ In such circumstances, when the intellectuals disagree and cannot even understand one another, Kantianism cannot provide the basis for social consensus. So Reinhold sets out both to explain Kant's unintelligibility and to render Kantianism intelligible as the basis for a consensus, by once again finding a middle-concept. Since he conceives the fundamental conflict of pre-Kantian philosophy as the conflict between rationalist advocates of innate ideas and empiricist advocates of sense-impressions, he proposes that the middle-concept is that of *representation*, about which each party has glimpsed part of the truth.³⁰ The term representation is far from new, but the concept which Kant expresses by it is. This is why Kant is *bound* to be misunderstood, or even found unintelligible, for he uses the familiar term

servation is truly notable, coming from a former Catholic priest! See also Reinhold (1789), VTV, 254. I Reinhold does not *explicitly* acknowledge any Spinozist challenge to Kant. Implicitly, however, and perhaps unwittingly, Reinhold may be influenced by Spinozism in his conception of systematicity. The ascription to Reinhold of Spinozistic Monism makes possible a response to a common objection to Reinhold: either the first principle expresses a concrete but particular state of consciousness, or it expresses an abstract generalization about all states of consciousness. In the former case, no universal consequences follow; in the latter, universal consequences follow, but only at an equally abstract level of generality, not about more specific features of consciousness. Construed monistically, however, the procedure is coherent: the first principle expresses the substance of the totality of states of consciousness, of which every particular state is a derivative modification. For contemporaneous versions of the objection, see Frank (1997), 320 and 340–342. For a recent version, see Beiser (1987), 245–246.

29. Already in Reinhold (1786–1787), BKP, letter 1, 123–124, Reinhold addresses an audience whom, he assumes, has not read Kant, but has heard that he is all-destroying and unintelligible. See also 126: if Kant has not yet won universal conviction, it is mainly for external reasons, not to be treated in the *Letters*. In Reinhold (1789), VTV, 15–16, Reinhold says that unintelligibility is the most general complaint against Kant, which deserves an explanation. And, in 1789, 17, Reinhold cites from a work published by Nicolai the argument that the genuine philosophical system must be free of all difficulties and should not put new incomprehensibilities in the place of the old ones. This would become a charge developed at length and in several books by Friedrich Nicolai, a central figure in the Berlin Enlightenment, who saw Kantianism and then German idealism as betraying the Enlightenment in virtue of their obscurities. Thanks to Frederick Beiser for alerting me to Nicolai's accusation, which deserves more extensive discussion elsewhere.

30. Reinhold may have been influenced by the *Stufenleiter* passage in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. See Kant (1900–), KrV, A320/B336. See Frank (1987), 220; Ameriks (2000a), 105.

representation in a wholly original way, and this affects the meaning of much of what he says.³¹

What Reinhold undertakes is not, however, merely a clarification of Kant's usage. He also endeavors, at the same time, to provide for Kant's philosophy a systematic justification that it has hitherto lacked. For Reinhold thinks that, as long as the underlying conception of representation remains implicit, Kant's philosophy is not only open to misunderstanding and incomprehension, but is also incapable of convincing Humean skeptics and Leibnizian dogmatists. The reason is familiar. Reinhold is well aware of Schultz's objection that Kant's arguments proceed from an assumption of the possibility of experience, employing the term *experience* in a sense amenable neither to the skeptic nor to the dogmatist, both of whom doubt that we have knowledge of the empirical, the skeptic because he doubts that we have any knowledge at all, the dogmatist because he considers genuine only knowledge of that which is absolutely grounded or of what supervenes upon it.³² Reinhold's Principle of Consciousness serves *both* as an exposition of the middle-concept of representation *and* as a premise from which Kant's theses may be proven to everyone's satisfaction—especially the thesis that objects of empirical knowledge are nothing but representations, but are nevertheless grounded in things in themselves, a thesis that will end forever the disputes between skeptics and dogmatists and between empiricists and rationalists.

None of this, Reinhold insists at the outset, is meant as a criticism of Kant, who has followed the only procedure available to the founder of a new science. The science must always be founded before its justification can be given.³³ There is always a period of time when a new science has attained *universal validity* but has not yet attained *universal acknowledgment*. As it was with Newton, so it is with Kant.³⁴ Revolutions, as Reinhold sees, present special challenges for communication.

31. Reinhold (1789), VTV, 48–50.

32. For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Kant's appeal to the possibility of experience as foundation, see, for example, Reinhold (1791), ÜF. In a letter to Kant, 12 October, 1787, Reinhold refers to his reading of a review in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* of Schultz's *Elucidations*. See Kant (1900–), 10: 498.

33. Reinhold (1789), VTV, 67.

34. Kant's revolution is already compared in Reinhold (1786–1787), BKP, letter 1, 126 to the decisive destruction of the theories of Ptolemy and Tycho by Copernicus and Newton. Reinhold (1789), VTV, 18–19, compares the unintelligibility of Kant's logical evidence to philosophers with the initial unintelligibility of Newton's mathematical evidence to mathematicians.

Although Reinhold's philosophy of the elements is intended only to ground the truths already discovered by Kant, it cannot help but undermine Kantian dualism, and it cannot help but do so precisely because of Reinhold's project of reconciliation through mediation. As we saw in Chapter 1, one expression of Kantian dualism is the claim that a range of terms, including the term *representation*, are ambiguous in ways that nobody prior to Kant has realized. They have both empirical senses and transcendental senses, corresponding to the distinction between the order of empirical reality/ideality and transcendental reality/ideality. By seeking to articulate a single sense of "representation" that is acceptable to all parties in dispute, Reinhold's project must be incompatible with Kantian dualism. Reinhold's mediation procedure aims to show that each party has already said something *true*, which, however, must be relativized to part of a single whole. Thus, the nativist is right about the *form* of representation, which is indeed innate, and the empiricist is right about the *matter* of representation, which is indeed given.

On Reinhold's picture, what is required is to give a single, systematic account of representation in all its aspects or as a whole. But, in contrast, Kant's disambiguation procedure aims to show that each party has said something that is at best false and at worst absurd, although the words employed can be used to say something true if given a new use and a new sense, through a fundamental dualism of subject matters that neither party conceives. Thus, everything Leibniz says about empirical objects is false but would be true on the false assumption that empirical objects are objects of the pure understanding, or that there is only the order of absolute grounding, which escapes the Agrippan trilemma. And everything Newton says about things in themselves is false but would be true on the false assumption that things in themselves are empirical objects, or that there is only the order of empirical grounding, which is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma. On Kant's picture, what is required is to give an account of the systematic ambiguity of "representation" and related terms.³⁵ From Kant's point of view, Reinhold underestimates how revolutionary Kant's revolu-

35. Ultimately, Kant also needs to show how this ambiguity is not a mere accident that could be prevented by using different terms. He needs to show more specifically that one sense of the contrast between "thing" and "representation"—associated with the order of empirical reality/ideality—is derived from the other—associated with the order of transcendental reality/ideality. But this need not undermine Kantian dualism by presupposing, as Reinhold does, that everyone has glimpsed part of the same whole.

tion is and so underestimates the complexities of revolutionary communication.³⁶

Reinhold's drive to consensus also undermines Kantian dualism in a second way. For he is not content to articulate an implicit conception of representation that would allow the derivation of Kant's explicit conception of possible experience, thereby grounding Kant's arguments without revising them. Instead, he seeks a "shorter argument" that bypasses the notion of possible experience and argues directly from the Principle of Consciousness to the ideality of all empirical objects.³⁷ The advantage of this strategy is that, if successful, it would show that things in themselves are not merely *unknowable*, as Kant argues, but are actually *unrepresentable*, hence *unthinkable* and *incomprehensible*.³⁸ Then both the skeptical worry that our representations do not correspond to things in themselves and the dogmatic aspiration to know things themselves would be totally ruled out, and the Kantian consensus could be established, once and for all.

As we saw in Chapter 1, this leads Reinhold to the view that intuition and concept, sensibility and understanding, are only rationally distinct, which is incompatible with Kant's doctrine of the faculties and, more generally, with Kantian dualism.³⁹ Reinhold still professes to remain a dualist of sorts: things in themselves cannot be represented, but they can nevertheless be shown to *exist* as the ground of the matter of representation, he thinks, and so they constitute an incomprehensible realm of rational faith.⁴⁰

36. See Ameriks (2000a), 106: "Unfortunately, in picking up on this notion [of representation], Reinhold tended to exacerbate rather than to set to rest the main problem of Kant's readers, namely, their tendency, like that of many interpreters to this day, to project back on the Critical system what is a crude conflation of empirical and transcendental uses of the term—a distinction that Kant himself introduced and would have been the last to confuse. On an 'empirical' understanding of the term, which tends to be the focus for Reinhold as well as Kant's first reviewers and the whole empiricist tradition, 'representation' signifies an inner, psychological episode, typically involving mere private 'sense data.'"

37. See Ameriks (2000a), 125–135, 163–186.

38. See Reinhold (1789), VTV, 244.

39. See Reinhold (1789), VTV, 235, for the view that the matter and form of representation are only notionally distinct: "both matter and form constitute representation indeed only through their *unification*, and may not be separated from one another without the representation being thereby destroyed." Reinhold goes on to say that "it is equally true that they are *essentially distinct* constituents of representation, and cannot be confused with one another, without bringing about a misunderstanding that must be extremely consequential in philosophy, and has actually been present until now."

40. Reinhold himself raises the obvious objection that, if things in themselves are unrepresentable, they cannot be represented as existing. He responds that his existence proof requires

But this is hardly Kant's dualism and, during the atheism controversy of 1798–1800, it enables Reinhold to claim a certain proximity to Jacobi.⁴¹

4.4

As the first principle of the system, Reinhold proposes the Principle of Consciousness: "*that in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from both object and subject and is referred to both.*"⁴² Much attention has recently been paid to the Principle, because Fichte and others *both* accept it as true *and* argue, with Reinhold's less sympathetic critics, that it cannot be the first principle. So the Principle itself continues to play a role of some importance within German idealism, while subsequently proposed versions of the first principle should be seen as arising in part from criticisms of it.

Discussion of the criticism of Reinhold's Principle has so far missed the big picture. In particular, what have been neglected are the *methodological* implications of the Principle's inadequacies, implications that largely determine the kinds of transcendental arguments German idealists see themselves as needing to develop. A symptom or cause of this neglect, as we shall see, is the problematic character of what has become a standard story in the Anglophone literature about the way in which criticism of Reinhold's Principle gives rise to Fichte's reformulation of the first principle in terms of immediate self-consciousness. Curiously enough, the story is false in almost every particular, although the regress argument turns out to have methodological implications of the greatest significance.

The regress argument is best approached through the consideration that it seems easy to refute the Principle by adducing counterexamples. For the Principle says, in effect, that *every* act or state of consciousness is mediated by a representation, plus an act or structure of distinction and an act or structure of reference. So *no* act or state of consciousness can be either an immediate expression of a subject or an immediate expression of an object. But there are acts or states of consciousness that are *immediate*—that is,

him to represent only the *concept* of a thing in itself, and to show that it must be instantiated, which does not involve representing things in themselves. See Reinhold (1789), VTV, 247–249.

41. Accused of atheism, Fichte eventually lost his job at Jena when he threatened to resign if the university failed to defend him. For details, see Brenzeale's introduction to Fichte (1994), xv–xviii.

42. Reinhold (1791), ÜF, 77.

unmediated by representation, and neither distinguished from nor referred to either subject or object, or both. Thus, for example, Schulze objects that, in the intuition of a putatively present, external object, I notice myself and a representation, but no distinct object, for the object is not distinguished from its representation during the episode of intuition, but only afterwards, if ever.⁴³ Similarly, Maimon objects in correspondence with Reinhold that the Principle cannot be true of consciousness in general because it does not apply to, among other possibilities, what Maimon calls a “mere perception”—that is, an isolated perceptual state or episode, not yet connected to other such states or episodes through conceptual synthesis, and therefore not yet ascribable either to an object or to a subject.⁴⁴ More famously, Fichte’s “original insight” is sometimes said to have arisen from his realization that the Principle cannot be true of first-personal self-awareness—that is, awareness of myself *as myself*, which cannot be mediated by any representation of myself and which, for that reason, is immune to error through misidentification.⁴⁵

The infinite regress objection is a way of showing that Reinhold *cannot help but* admit the counterexample cases. The objection is as follows. Reinhold’s Principle mentions, as constituents of any act or state of consciousness, relation to and distinction from the representing subject, and relation to and distinction from the represented object. Surely, one cannot relate to and distinguish from something of which one is not conscious. So consciousness of subject and object must be involved in or presupposed by every act or state of consciousness. But these modes of consciousness cannot, once again, have the representational structure characterized in the Principle. For, if they did, then they would once again involve representations that are related to and distinguished from both the subject and object. And then these relations and distinctions would again involve or presuppose consciousness of both subject and object, and so on *ad infinitum*. Clearly, it is impossible for every act or state of consciousness to involve or presuppose an actual infinity of acts or states of consciousness. So there *must* be counterexamples to the Principle, cases in which consciousness is *immediate*, or *pre-representational*.

43. Schulze (1996), 73.

44. Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 216–217, 226–228.

45. Henrich (1971) is the first to connect Fichte with contemporary developments in philosophy of mind. See Franks (forthcoming b) and 304–313 below.

If anything, it seems *too* easy to adduce counterexamples and even to raise the regress objection. Could none of this have occurred to Reinhold, at least as a possible objection against which he would have to guard? Or is it possible that Reinhold concedes the counterexample cases but does not regard them as counterexamples because he does not call them acts or states of *consciousness*? If so, then the issue is terminological. But then what, if anything, is really at stake?

As I have mentioned, a standard story about criticism of Reinhold's criticism has emerged in recent Anglophone literature. According to that story, the regress objection is first raised by Gottlob Ernst Schulze, in *Aenesidemus*, his important, anonymous book of 1792, criticizing Reinhold and Kant. Through consideration of Schulze's regress objection, Fichte comes to see not only that there must be immediate, pre-representational consciousness, but that the first principle of the German idealist system must express immediate, pre-representational *self-consciousness*. Thus is launched not only Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, but also a significant tradition of thought about the immediacy of self-consciousness and its implications.

Unfortunately, this story is false in almost every detail. First, Schulze does not raise a regress objection against Reinhold. Second, the regress objection, as it stands, does not touch Reinhold because he explicitly says that the Principle involves immediate, pre-representational consciousness of both subject and object. Third, Fichte raises a regress objection against all pre-Fichtean accounts of consciousness but does not target Reinhold. Nonetheless, it will turn out that Fichte's regress argument has implications for Reinhold.

According to both Frederick Neuhouser and Wayne Martin, Schulze gives a regress argument against Reinhold's Principle,⁴⁶ from which he concludes that "it *cannot* be the case that all our mental states are representations"⁴⁷ or, more specifically, "that the self-consciousness involved in representational consciousness cannot itself be another species of representation."⁴⁸ What is the textual evidence for the claim that Schulze gives a regress argument? Martin cites Schulze's objection that: "The perception of the object to which the representation is related and from which it is distinguished does not consist once again in something's being related and

46. Neuhouser (1990), 71–72; Martin (1997), 88.

47. Martin (1997), 88.

48. Neuhouser (1990), 72.

distinguished by the subject to the subject and the object; just as little as can the perception of the subject, to which the representation is ascribed and from which it is distinguished."⁴⁹ Here Martin emphasizes the words, "once again." However, these words need not indicate that Schulze is making an infinite regress objection. He may be objecting to the Principle on the realist ground that, if there genuinely is an object to distinguish from one's representation, then one's consciousness of that object must ultimately be grounded in an immediate perception of the object—grounded, that is, in immediate contact with something that transcends consciousness. The point of the words "once again" would be that realism requires that there not be, as it were, consciousness all the way down. At some point, there must be things that are not themselves acts or states of consciousness. Indeed, not long before the quoted sentence, Schulze sounds strikingly like Jacobi. He says that Reinhold's Principle applies at best to a kind of mental state of which intuitions are not a species because: "During the intuition, there is no place for any distinction between an object and a representation, for, as long as the intuition lasts, no object different from it is noticed; indeed, the origination of a distinction between an object and a representation would at the same time destroy [*vernichten*] the intuiting."⁵⁰

It may seem that I am nitpicking. After all, even if Schulze's objection is not explicitly put in the form of an infinite regress, can it not be put into that form, thus bringing out the extent to which Fichte—who explicitly gives an infinite regress argument—is indebted to Schulze?

Undoubtedly. But there is danger here, *especially* because Fichte gives an infinite regress argument. The infinite regress form is of special significance for someone who presupposes, as German idealists do, that there is a pressing need to escape the Agrippan trilemma. Schulze exhibits no interest in this problem. It does not appear to concern him, for instance, whether immediate perceptions of subject and object are absolutely unconditioned or merely arbitrary. For Schulze, the primary philosophical question is not Agrippan skepticism but rather the Cartesian or Humean conflict between skepticism and everyday realism, the latter position understood as direct realism, in a way reminiscent of Scottish common-sense

49. Schulze (1996), 87–88, partially cited by Martin (1997), 88.

50. Schulze (1996), 86.

philosophy and Jacobi. In *Aenesidemus*, Schulze sees no way to overcome skepticism, so understood. Later in his career, he becomes a defender of realism. Thus, Schulze's objection to the Principle is that it begs the question *both* against skepticism, by assuming that objects distinct from subjects and representations are represented, *and*—as the present point shows—against everyday realism. Reinhold's principle is supposed to establish the new middle-concept of representation, thus removing the obstacle that prevents Kantianism from being universally intelligible and universally acknowledged. But if the Principle simply begs the question against both skepticism and everyday realism, why should anyone accept it and the new concept it articulates?

That this is Schulze's point is further supported by the conclusion he explicitly draws. For he does *not* conclude, as Neuhouser and Martin would have it, that there must be some pre-representational mental states, in particular, states of pre-representational self-consciousness. This would be a reasonable conclusion to draw if Schulze were interested in finding some foundational act or state that could stop the regress while remaining within consciousness. But Schulze has no such interest. His interest is in Reinhold's ability to achieve universal intelligibility and, indeed, philosophical consensus. The point of his argument is that Reinhold's conception of representation is narrower than the everyday notion and depends only on question-begging. This means that, from the very beginning, Reinhold's proposed middle-concept is not one on whose use everyone will agree.

As Schulze himself notes, Reinhold explicitly states that the constituents of every act or state of consciousness—relation to and distinction from the representing subject, and relation to and distinction from the represented object—are not, once again, representational. Since it is generally supposed that this is not Reinhold's position and that the regress objection cuts straightforwardly against him, it is worth quoting him at length:

Representation *belongs* to every consciousness; but so too does still more than representation, namely the subject and object, which are distinct from the representation in consciousness. However, to call the *relating* of the mere representation to object and subject representation would be a very unphilosophical confusion of linguistic usage, which has determined this word for that which, in consciousness, is related to the subject and object. Furthermore, not only is the double relatedness of relation no representation, but it is also in no way *represented* in consciousness in

general, whose form it is. The *representing* of this relatedness is not the relatedness itself; not consciousness, but rather a representing of consciousness; and the representation of consciousness is not consciousness, but rather representation of consciousness, which—related to consciousness as object and to the subject—yields consciousness of consciousness. Finally, it is still less the case that consciousness can be the representation of reciprocal relation between the subject in itself and the mere form [and] between the object in itself and the mere matter of representation, for all these four things are unrepresentable.⁵¹

So Reinhold does not straightforwardly have a regress problem, and Schulze is well aware of it! However, Schulze says: “this assertion [about linguistic usage] is without weight, simply because it stands without any proof.” According to “usual linguistic usage,” Schulze insists, these acts of distinguishing and referring *are* called representings and it is perfectly in order to say, for example, that someone immersed in intuition represents himself as an intuiting subject. Contrary to both Neuhouser and Martin, then, Schulze insists that immediate perceptions *are* representings, although he denies that they have the structure that *Reinhold* requires for representation.

In short, Schulze’s point is simply that Reinhold’s Principle, which is intended to explicate the foundational term *representation* in a universally intelligible and universally acknowledged way, in fact employs that term in an arbitrary fashion that conflicts with ordinary usage and that can be accepted only if the question is begged against both everyday realism and skepticism. Schulze’s discussion is shaped by his view that the main issue in philosophy is the conflict between everyday realism and skepticism. The views of Kant and Reinhold turn out to be neither realistic nor honestly skeptical. To put Schulze’s point in the form of an infinite regress argument—a form used by Fichte, as we shall shortly see—is misleading because it ignores Schulze’s presuppositions about the central problems of philosophy and their difference from Fichte’s. Unlike Fichte, Schulze does not assume that we need some foundational act or state within consciousness to stop some regress. Fichte is indebted to Schulze, and he may be influenced by Schulze’s insistence on immediate consciousness of object and subject in particular—although he may get that idea directly from Reinhold! But Schulze shows no interest in organizing these immediate

51. Reinhold (1789), VIV, 323–324.

perceptions under a single first principle, let alone in deriving them from such a principle.

I turn now to Fichte, who *does* give a regress argument and who assumes that it can be overcome only through the discovery of one foundational, immediate consciousness. This is because, unlike Schulze, he is concerned to arrive at a first principle whose absoluteness enables an escape from the Agrippan trilemma, and because his version of the Spinoza-Kant synthesis involves the idea of a first principle immanent within consciousness as a whole. Now, it is true that Fichte never explicitly raises the infinite regress objection against Reinhold's Principle. In fact, although this point seems to have been missed, strictly speaking Reinhold has no regress problem because he says explicitly that the acts constitutive of representational consciousness are not themselves representational. Indeed, as Henrich noted, the insight into the immediacy of self-consciousness which he originally ascribed to Fichte and even claimed to be the basis of Fichte's claim to originality is actually noted by Reinhold himself.⁵² Fichte is probably aware of this. He may well be referring to Reinhold's own explicit but undeveloped account of pre-representational self-consciousness when he says, defending Reinhold against Schulze:

The subject and object do indeed have to be thought of as preceding representation, but not in consciousness qua an empirical mental state, which is all that Reinhold is speaking of. The absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is instead, posited by intellectual intuition. And the absolute object, the not-I, is that which is posited in opposition to the I. Neither of these occur in empirical consciousness except when a representation is related to them. In empirical consciousness they are both present only indirectly, as the representing subject and as what is represented. One is never conscious of the *absolute* subject (the representing subject which would not be represented) or of the *absolute* object (a thing in itself, independent of all representation) as something empirically given. Reinhold might well be reserving discussion of such topics for some future time.⁵³

This passage surely anticipates central features of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, but the ideas of an unrepresentable absolute subject, an unrepre-

52. Henrich (1992).

53. Fichte (1964-), RA, I/2: 47.

sentable absolute object, and intellectual intuition are already present in Reinhold.

Still Fichte gives a general regress argument that applies, as he thinks, to all pre-Fichtean philosophy—as he says, including Kant's. Reinhold is neither specifically mentioned as a target nor specifically exempted. Does the argument have any weight against Reinhold?

We have three formulations of the argument, and I will discuss the one that requires least discussion of specifically Fichtean notions, while drawing on the others where convenient:

Hitherto, people reasoned as follows: We cannot be conscious of things posited in opposition to us, that is, of external objects, unless we are conscious of ourselves, i.e., unless we are an object for ourself. This occurs by means of an act of our own consciousness, of which we are able to become conscious only insofar as we, in turn, think of ourself as an object and thereby obtain a consciousness of our own consciousness. But we become conscious of this consciousness of our consciousness only by, once again, turning it into an object and thereby obtaining a consciousness of the consciousness of our consciousness, and so on *ad infinitum*. Our consciousness, however, would never be explained in this manner. Or else one would have to conclude that there is no consciousness at all—so long, that is, as one continues to treat consciousness as a state of mind or else as an object; for in proceeding in this manner one always presupposes a subject, which, however, one can never discover.⁵⁴

This infinite regress argument has a structure analogous to that of the argument for the Antithesis of the Third Antinomy, as well as to that of Kant's argument against Spinozism, both of which have been discussed in Chapter 2. The context in which the argument is given is the attempt to establish a first principle: an absolutely unconditioned condition. The argument can be regarded as demonstrating the danger of appealing to an unconditioned that is *homogeneous* with what it is supposed to condition. Such an unconditioned will turn out to be subject to the same conditions as what it is supposed to condition, and therefore cannot be absolutely unconditioned after all. At best, it can be relatively unconditioned, like the omnipresent and sempiternal God of Newton, but then it does not enable any escape from the Agrippan trilemma. Like the two arguments to which it is similar, this argument demonstrates that a truly absolute uncondi-

54. Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2, 30. See Neuhouser (1990), 73.

tioned must be *heterogeneous* with the series of conditioned. And, as we have seen, there are at least two ways of meeting the Heterogeneity Requirement: either the absolutely unconditioned must *transcend the series as a whole*, or it must *be immanent in the series as a whole*. Either way, it is not to be regarded as something like a part of the whole, a member of the series, which, however, stands outside the series. For then it will end up becoming a mere part, just another member, subject to the law of the series.

With this in mind, I turn to Fichte's actual argument. Its first premise is that, if I am conscious of some object as "external," or as "not I," then this consciousness must involve self-consciousness. Since the argument is meant to be as general as possible, no specific account of the structure of object-consciousness, such as Reinhold's, is mentioned. In this general form, Fichte thinks the premise "incontrovertible."⁵⁵ However, it is open to problematic interpretations. Thus the second premise problematically interprets the required self-consciousness as a species of object-consciousness. Whatever the details of the interpretation—whether the object in question is the self or a state of the self, and so on—this leads to an infinite regress. For self-consciousness will turn out to have the same conditions as the initial object-consciousness it conditions.

So far, this argument seems straightforward. But notice the presuppositions required to draw Fichte's conclusion. For Fichte concludes that there must be an "immediate consciousness," or an activity in which I posit myself as positing and in which, therefore, I am immediately both subject and object. What matters for our present purposes is only that the claim is obscure and *requires* detailed discussion. For it would seem that a far less obscure resolution is available. Why not say, for example, as Schulze does, that object-consciousness must involve *immediate perceptions*, both of oneself and of the object? These immediate perceptions would be, in Kantian terminology, empirical intuitions of one's body and of the object as spatio-temporally distinct. And one might try to avoid the regress by claiming that, implicit in object-consciousness, there is an empirical self-

55. In what is known as the K version of the text, a further premise is added, to the effect that I cannot be conscious of myself without being conscious of consciousness. In the published version, the premise is reversed: I cannot be conscious of an object without being conscious of my thinking, and I cannot be conscious of my thinking without being conscious of myself. Both versions of the additional premise turn on the Fichtean point that every thought available for rational deliberation is *de se*. See Lewis (1979), Chapter 5 of the present work and Franks (forthcoming b).

intuition which, although it is a species of object-intuition, does not require any further self-consciousness.

Fichte in fact has principled objections to such a suggestion. He thinks that the awareness of an object *as my body* cannot involve a merely empirical intuition like the intuition of other objects in which I am not incarnate. But in the context of the regress argument, he does not raise these objections and indeed he does not even consider any resolutions other than the one he proposes. He simply assumes, in accordance with Derivation and Holistic Monism, first, that there must be a single, absolutely unconditioned ground for consciousness, and second, that this ground must not transcend consciousness. Schulze's suggestion is therefore excluded from consideration in advance: it proposes a plurality of grounds, for whose unconditionedness it does not vouch, and these grounds involve consciousness-transcendent subjects and objects. Fichte presupposes a particular view of what it would take to "explain" consciousness, and his proposed solution is intended to conform to those requirements:

Reasons can be given for all the other specific determinations that occur within consciousness, but no reason can be given for immediate consciousness. Immediate consciousness is itself the ultimate reason or foundation upon which everything else is based and to which everything else has to be traced back, if our knowledge is to have any foundation.⁵⁶

Since Fichte introduces his conception of immediate consciousness precisely in order to find an absolutely unconditioned condition for the *a priori* possibility of experience, it should come as no surprise that this conception can only be grasped from what he calls "the *idealistic* or *transcendental* viewpoint," not from "the *ordinary* or *practical* viewpoint," and that "the I" that is both subject and object in immediate consciousness is not me in the ordinary sense, is not me as an individual person. For the point of Fichte's regress argument is to apply to the project of grounding the *a priori* possibility of experience, first, the Kantian realization that an absolutely unconditioned condition must be heterogeneous to the series it conditions and, second, the Spinozistic realization that it also cannot transcend that series.

Does Fichte's regress argument have any weight against Reinhold? Not in the way supposed by the standard story. For Reinhold already sees the need for nonrepresentational relations to what he calls the absolute subject

56. Fichte (1964–), WLn, IV/2: 31.

and the absolute object, so he does not have an infinite regress problem. Fichte's objection to Reinhold's Principle is not that it leads to an infinite regress—which Fichte never says—but rather that it manages to avoid leading to an infinite regress only because it is not, as Reinhold officially claims, the *first* principle of his system. Nonrepresentational self-consciousness and object-consciousness *must* be prior to the Principle, according to Reinhold himself!

This is not all, however. Like its analogues, Fichte's infinite regress argument may be regarded as an argument for a Heterogeneity Requirement, and it can be shown both that Reinhold's Principle fails to unequivocally meet the Requirement and that Fichte is aware of the problem.

To see Reinhold's problem with the Heterogeneity Requirement, we must first consider the conditions that Reinhold wants the first principle to meet, all of which are obviously motivated by the need to escape the Agrippan trilemma by finding a fourth, absolutely unconditioned alternative. Reinhold insists that the first principle cannot merely fail to have any condition or ground outside itself, for then it—and the system grounded in it—would be merely arbitrary or groundless. Rather, the first principle must be *self-grounding*. Although he is not always careful to distinguish them, Reinhold seems to have three different sorts of self-grounding in mind. First, the first principle must be "self-explanatory": it (or rather its subject matter) must provide itself with its own *ontic ground*, the reason why it is the way it is. Second, the first principle must be self-evident: it must provide itself with its own *epistemic ground* or reason for being believed, without relying inferentially on the evidence of some other truth. Third, the first principle must be "self-determining": it must provide its own *semantic ground* or introduce its own terms clearly and unequivocally, without relying on prior definitions. Furthermore, we must recall that the point of grounding philosophy in the first principle is not merely to secure universal validity (*Allgemeingültigkeit*) for philosophy, but also to secure universal acknowledgment (*Allgemeingeltung*). So "the author must try to guarantee the universal validity of his theory by presupposing nothing at all to be universally valid which is not actually universally acknowledged."⁵⁷ So the first principle must not only be self-grounding in the three senses distinguished, but it must also be universally acknowledged as self-grounding in these senses.

Reinhold insists that the Principle of Consciousness expresses "an *actual*

57. Reinhold (1789), VTV, 66.

fact [*Tatsache*].”⁵⁸ Since the first principle (*Grundsatz*) is *objectively real*, we may argue regressively to the *reality* of all the necessary conditions of its possibility. Indeed, the fact expressed by the Principle is *the fact of consciousness*. However, we encounter serious difficulties when we try to explain what this fact is.

At least two terms used in the Principle are ambiguous, which gives rise to an ambiguity at the sentential level as well. First, “fact” is ambiguous. In the eighteenth century, both “*Tatsache*” and “matter of fact” still retain the sense of an *act* (“*Tat*,” “fact”) whose performance could be relevantly demonstrated; a *Tatsache* has not yet hardened into a proposition’s being true or into the obtaining of a state of affairs. Nowadays it can be difficult to hear the sense of activity in these familiar terms. But *Tat* is still visible in *Tatsache* and, although we are apt to forget that “fact” is derived from the Latin *facere* (“to do”), we still speak, for example, of accomplices *before or after the fact*, where by “fact” we mean the criminal deed. When Reinhold speaks of the fact of consciousness, this process of reification was already underway. The result is that in his usage “fact” is ambiguous because it refers both to *an act of determining* and to *the determination produced by that act*. The ambiguity is compounded because the genitive “of” can be construed either as an *objective genitive* (“the fact pertaining to consciousness”) or as an *explicative genitive* (“the fact of there being consciousness,” that is, “the fact constitutive of consciousness”).

Consequently, “the fact of consciousness” can be construed in at least four ways:

- a. “the determining act pertaining to consciousness”
- b. “the determining act constitutive of consciousness”
- c. “the determination or structure pertaining to consciousness”
- d. “the determination or structure constitutive of consciousness”

Reinhold himself seems to construe the phrase as both (b) and (c). He construes the phrase as (b) when he writes:

The concept of *representation* does not merely stand as a *simple concept*, at the ground of the principle of consciousness; it is also determined by what the principle expresses, viz., the *actual facts* of *consciousness*. And *inasmuch* as it is so determined, it constitutes (when expressed in words) the *definition of representation*. It is the *scientific concept* of representation, and the task of the theory of the faculty of representation is to exhaust

58. Reinhold (1791), ÜF, 77.

its content. The original, unexplainable and simple concept of representation *precedes* consciousness; it stands at its ground. In contrast, the original but complex and explainable concept of the same *follows* from consciousness, and is determined by the facts that make up the latter—i.e., the *distinguishing* of the representation which is as such unexplainable from the object and subject, and its *being referred* to them—as well as through the *proposition* expressing these facts.⁵⁹

Here “the *actual facts of consciousness*” are the *acts* of distinguishing and referring that “make up,” that is, constitute consciousness. Those “facts” or acts determine “the original, unexplainable and simple concept of representation” that “*precedes* consciousness” and “stands at its ground.” In other words, “the . . . facts of consciousness” are acts that determine the ground of consciousness. It is crucial to note that Reinhold construes “fact of consciousness” as “act determining consciousness” when he is discussing the self-explanatoriness or *ontically self-grounding* nature of the Principle of Consciousness. So construed, the fact of consciousness—really two acts or an act with two aspects—is absolutely unconditioned, presumably because it needs no explanation, not merely because it lacks one, which would render it arbitrary.

On the other hand, Reinhold construes “fact of consciousness” as (c) when he writes:

The concept of representation, which the science of the faculty of representation is to determine *analytically*, must have already been *synthetically* determined to this end. So determined—independently of all philosophizing, for the latter depends on this original determinateness for its correctness—the concept of representation can only be drawn from the CONSCIOUSNESS of an *actual fact*. This fact alone, *qua fact*, must *ground* the foundation of the Philosophy of the Elements—for otherwise the foundation cannot rest, without circularity, on any philosophically demonstrable proposition. It is not through any inference of reason that we know that in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from both object and subject and is referred to both, but through simple reflection upon the actual fact of consciousness, that is, by ordering together what is present in it.⁶⁰

Here “the actual fact of consciousness” is the determination or structure pertaining to consciousness. One may suppose that there are many such

59. Reinhold (1791), ŨF, 77–78.

60. Ibid.

determinations or structures. But by referring to *the* fact of consciousness, Reinhold surely intends to indicate that determination or structure possessed by *every* act or state of consciousness just insofar as it is an act or state of consciousness. It is crucial to note that, in the passage cited above, Reinhold appeals to this construal of the Principle in order to make out the claim that the Principle is self-evident or *epistemically self-grounding*. That is to say, the determination or structure in question is always present in any act or state of consciousness, and, if one wants to discern it, one need only reflect on any such act or state—say, the one occurring right now.

Given these two features of the Principle of Consciousness, Reinhold appears to have the elements of a transcendental argument that will demonstrate the universal validity of Kant's theses by grounding them in an absolutely unconditioned condition and, moreover, that will do so to universal acknowledgment. Because the Principle of Consciousness is putatively self-explanatory, it is a suitable candidate for the starting-point of a justification that is infinitely intelligible and is not subject to the Agrippan trilemma. And because the Principle of Consciousness is putatively self-evident, it follows that any justification following rigorously from it would be undeniable by even the most recalcitrant opponent of Kant, whether Wolffian, Spinozist, or Humean.

But the Principle of Consciousness only seems to have both features in virtue of its ambiguity. The Principle of Consciousness is supposed to be ontically self-grounding because it expresses facts or acts—the distinguishing of the representation from the subject and the reference of the representation to the subject—that are absolutely unconditioned conditions of consciousness. At the same time, the Principle of Consciousness is supposed to be epistemically self-grounding because the facts or acts it expresses are noninferentially discernible in any act or state of consciousness whatsoever—are discernible *through mere reflection alone*, without any further intellectual act, say, of abstraction. But it is far from clear that Reinhold can have it both ways, that his Principle can be both ontically and epistemically self-grounding.

Fichte rejects Reinhold's claim that the Principle is discernible through mere reflection, as is clear from the following response to Schulze's assertion that the Principle is "abstract":

It is well known that Reinhold denies that this principle is based upon any kind of abstraction. This is very illuminating if it is said against those who think that the Principle of Consciousness is obtained by abstraction

from the conditions of intuition, concept, and idea. For it is illuminating to show that, far from the concept of mere representation being based upon intuitions, concepts, and ideas, it is only by distinguishing and relating several mere representations *as such* that the concepts of intuition, concept, and idea become possible. One can completely determine the concept of representation as such without having to determine the latter concepts. But one cannot determine the concepts of intuition, concept, and idea without having determined the concept of representation. If, however, Reinhold means to deny not only that the principle is based upon *this particular* abstraction, but also to deny that it is based upon *any* abstraction *at all*, then the very opposite of his claim can be demonstrated—insofar, anyway, as the Principle of Consciousness is supposed to stand as the first principle at the summit of all philosophy. That is to say, if everything that can be discovered in the mind is an act of representing, and if every act of representing is undeniably an *empirical* determination of the mind, then the very act of representing, along with all of its conditions, is given to consciousness only through the representation of representing. It is thus *empirically* given, and empirical representations are the objects of all reflection concerning consciousness. The object of every empirical representation is determinately given (in space, in time, etc.), but in the representation of representing as such (which is what the Principle of Consciousness expresses), abstraction is necessarily made from these empirical determinations of the given object. Consequently, the Principle of Consciousness, which is placed at the summit of all philosophy, is based upon empirical self-observation and certainly expresses an abstraction. Admittedly, anyone who understands this principle well will feel an inner reluctance to ascribe to it a merely empirical validity. The opposite of what this principle asserts is not even conceivable. But this is just what indicates that it must be based upon something other than a mere fact. This reviewer anyway is convinced that the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the Principle of Consciousness can be strictly derived, *a priori* and independently of all experience.⁶¹

In other words, the Principle of Consciousness cannot be arrived at, as Reinhold claims, through mere reflection on immediately discernible features of any act or state of consciousness, for empirical acts or states of consciousness involve spatio-temporal objects. These acts or states are therefore spatio-temporally conditioned. But surely the Principle of Consciousness is not spatio-temporally conditioned, or else there would be no

61. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 46.

hope of deriving from it either principles unconditioned by space and time or, to whatever extent it should prove possible, the forms of sensibility themselves. So Reinhold must not only reflect on empirical consciousness, but he must also abstract from some of its necessary conditions. And now it is clear that there is something profoundly wrong with Reinhold's procedure. For if the Principle is arrived at through abstraction from some of the necessary conditions of empirical acts or states of consciousness, then it can have "a merely empirical validity." This can be understood in two ways. First, no universal and necessary principle can be justified through abstraction, so the Principle can be at best inductive and probable. Second, no absolutely unconditioned condition can be arrived at through mere negation of certain conditions. Such a procedure can yield at best a relatively unconditioned that is *homogeneous* with that which it is supposed to condition. Even if the Principle of Consciousness is not spatio-temporally conditioned, it will still turn out to share some conditions with the empirical acts or states from which it is abstracted, and so it will not be fit to serve as their absolutely unconditioned first principle, for it will be incapable of stopping the regress.

The consequence immediately drawn from this argument by Fichte is that the Principle of Consciousness will be shown to have the more than merely empirical validity it deserves only when it is derived *a priori* from a higher principle, which, of course, Fichte thinks he has up his sleeve. For my purposes, however, what is important at the moment is that this argument shows the incompatibility between Reinhold's claim to self-evidence and his claim to self-explanatoriness. The basis for the claim to self-evidence is precisely that the Principle is derived through mere reflection alone. To grasp and affirm the Principle, you need only look and see, but Fichte rejects this basis. He argues that you would need not only to look and to see, but also to abstract. Even if this were sufficient for you to grasp and affirm the Principle, it would not be sufficient for you to grasp and affirm the Principle as universal and necessary, let alone as a self-explanatory principle that is absolutely unconditioned. So, to grasp and affirm the first principle—which is *not* the Principle of Consciousness—looking and seeing can never be sufficient, even if accompanied by abstraction. This is why Fichte says that the Principle is based upon "empirical self-observation"—that is, a self-observation that is carried out *from the empirical point of view*, the same point of view from which one has ordinary states of consciousness. Reinhold's way of securing self-evidence can never

help you grasp and affirm a self-explanatory principle, and no self-explanatory principle can be self-evident in Reinhold's sense.

This, then, is the force of Fichte's regress argument against Reinhold. Insofar as the regress argument establishes a Heterogeneity Requirement, it enables us to deepen the ambiguity charge against Reinhold. It is not just that, as we have seen, Reinhold uses words ambiguously. His underlying conception of the first principle is itself ambiguous. On the one hand, he conceives it as a principle that is self-explanatory and therefore heterogeneous to what it conditions. On the other hand, he conceives it as a principle that is self-evident through "empirical self-observation" and therefore homogeneous with what it conditions. Moreover, this ambiguity must infect his conception of the entire system because it infects the character of his transcendental arguments. For if the first principle is heterogeneous with what it conditions, then systematic derivations from it should *progress* from ground to grounded. But if the first principle is homogeneous with what it conditions, then systematic derivations from it should *regress* from grounded to ground. Reinhold is—to use an apt phrase—*systematically ambiguous*.

The ambiguity charge bears out the point made in the previous section. Driven by his illuminatist version of the Enlightenment project, Reinhold seeks to make explicit a fundamental rational consensus that, in some sense, already exists, despite the disagreements that are rife in both society and philosophy. He wants to establish a single sense of "representation" that will enable each modern philosophical sect—the rationalists, the empiricists, and the skeptics—to be partly correct. So he fails to distinguish transcendental from empirical uses of "representation" and related terms, and his inheritance of Kantian dualism is accordingly compromised.

On the one hand, the Principle of Consciousness is supposed to explicate the empirical use of "representation," the use shared by pre-Kantian dogmatists and skeptics, according to which representations are private, mental states or objects, that purport to represent things external to the mind. On the other hand, it is supposed to explicate the transcendental use, so that representations turn out to be related not to empirical objects but to the absolute object or the thing in itself. Insofar as the Principle is supposed to explicate the empirical use, it is an empirical principle that cannot avoid being homogeneous with what it conditions and that therefore cannot be absolutely unconditioned or ontically self-grounding. Insofar as it is supposed to explicate the transcendental use, it is a transcendental principle

that invokes relations to a subject and an object that are indeed absolute, although the German idealists will need to ask whether both can be equi-primordial or whether one is prior to the other. The heterogeneity of the transcendental version of the Principle shows that it cannot be epistemically self-grounding in the way Reinhold suggests. It raises the question whether an adequate version of the first principle can be self-evident at all.

What is called for is *disambiguation*. One can see Fichte beginning to disambiguate when he makes his famous declaration:

This reviewer anyway is convinced that the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the Principle of Consciousness can be strictly derived, *a priori* and independently of all experience. The initial incorrect presupposition, and the one which caused the Principle of Consciousness to be proposed as the first principle of all philosophy, was precisely the presupposition that one must begin with a fact [*Tatsache*]. We certainly do require a first principle which is material and not merely formal. But such a principle does not have to express a *fact*; it can also express an *Act* [*Tathandlung*]⁶²—if I may risk asserting something which can be neither explained nor proven here.

I will say more in Chapter 5 about the idea of a first principle that expresses an act. For the moment, what is most important is to see that Fichte is responding to the ambiguity between a determination or structure and act pertaining to consciousness and an act constituting consciousness. He chooses the latter over the former, for only the former could be heterogeneous to the acts or states of consciousness that it is supposed to condition.

Fichte is also engaged in disambiguation when he insists that only a progressive argument can establish grounding in an absolutely unconditioned condition, thereby avoiding an infinite regress and escaping the Agrippan trilemma:

Reinhold . . . begins with facts in order to ascend to the foundation of these facts. . . . Reinhold's procedure would be the reverse of that of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, if only such a reversal were possible, and if only one were able, by ascending from what is founded to its foundation, to arrive at its ultimate foundation. But this series is endless. The *Wissenschaftslehre* descends from the ultimate foundation, which it possesses, to the things

62. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2, 46.

which are based upon this foundation: from the absolute to the conditioned elements contained within the absolute—that is, to the actual, true facts of consciousness.⁶³

In short, Fichte concludes that if German idealism is to construct a system with a first principle that is absolutely unconditioned, then the transcendental must be clearly distinguished from the empirical, and transcendental argument must progress from a heterogeneous condition.

4.5

One gains a helpful sense of the options available from another exercise in disambiguation: an essay published by Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer in 1795, in the first issue of the *Philosophisches Journal*, of which he was a founder.⁶⁴ Although Niethammer does not lay out the problems encountered by Reinhold's system as I have done, what he says may be construed as a response to those problems.

First, some scene-setting is in order. A former student of Reinhold's, now teaching at Jena, Niethammer is in contact with a range of Reinhold's students and colleagues, Niethammer is also the first to take the path from Tübingen to Jena, the path followed by his friends, Friedrich Hölderlin, Schelling and Hegel. He is writing in the first academic year after Reinhold's departure from Jena, which is also the first year at Jena of Reinhold's replacement, Fichte. As we know, by this time Reinhold himself has been persuaded to revise his conception of the elementary philosophy—not by the publications of his hostile critics, but rather by correspondence and conversation with his own students.⁶⁵ However, Reinhold's revised conception, developed in 1792, is published only in 1794 and does not seem to influence Fichte or Schelling, who are already developing their own conceptions in response to Reinhold's hostile critics.

Some of Reinhold's former students—including Niethammer himself—are dismayed by Fichte's appointment, not only because he is an outsider professionally, but also because he is an outsider philosophically: Fichte is

63. Fichte (1964–), VSW, I/3: 264.

64. Niethammer (1795), 1–45.

65. See Reinhold's letter to Erhard, 18 June, 1792, explaining his shift in response to criticisms made by Immanuel Carl Diez, whom Schelling and Hegel also knew at Tübingen, in Diez (1997), 911–914. For discussion, see Henrich (1992), 114–125; Frank (1997), 363–661.

still committed to some version of Reinhold's original project of grounding the whole of philosophy in a first principle, a project that Niethammer and some of his friends have given up as futile. Niethammer's essay is the first published in the first issue of a new journal dedicated to discussion of the issues facing those who regard Kant's revolution as a necessary but insufficient condition for establishing philosophy as a science. Soon, Fichte will become a co-editor along with Niethammer, and the journal will become in large part a vehicle for Fichte's new version of the German idealist project, to which some of Reinhold's former students—like Friedrich Karl Forberg—and, in 1797, even Reinhold himself, will convert.

According to Niethammer's essay, the general problem that philosophy must solve is as follows. Judgments are made on the basis of a feeling of immediate certainty, that speak with a universal voice and claim acknowledgment from everyone. Taken collectively, these judgments constitute *the common understanding*. But these judgments are vulnerable to skeptical doubt because feelings can be mere psychological deceptions, expressions of nothing more than prejudice or habit. The proper task of philosophy is to defend the common understanding against skepticism. However, every philosophy developed so far has been worse than the skepticism against which it promised a defense. For every philosophy developed so far has, in effect, threatened to *annihilate* the common understanding. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise. For every philosophy developed so far—that is, prior to the Kantian revolution—has assumed that justification is grounding in things in themselves and has therefore been forced to substitute chains of mediation—processes of abstraction or induction—for the immediacy of feelings. Moreover, no such justification has ever succeeded or ever will.

Now, however, the Kantian revolution opens a new prospect. Since it conceives justification, not as grounding in things in themselves, but rather as grounding in the necessary laws of the mind, it is possible that the critical philosophy may show that the common understanding's feelings of immediate certainty are expressions of those laws. (Note the clear influence of Jacobi, both in Niethammer's emphasis on immediacy and in the idea that pre-Kantian philosophy threatens annihilation.)

At this point, Niethammer suggests, there are two possible projects. After the Kantian revolution, one may undertake to justify the common understanding either *immediately* or *mediately*. An immediate justification would show that judgments of the common understanding are universal and nec-

essary in virtue of the nature of the subject. This would involve a *regressive* argument from that on which everybody worth talking to agrees:

The most general datum that is familiar to us about the subject: *that in general experience is*. Philosophy presupposes this universal chief fact and thus raises the highest question which it has to answer in this way: *how is experience possible?* Philosophy therefore cannot begin *a priori* and proceed from an *a priori* immediately certain proposition as something in itself unconditioned, downwards synthetically along the series of conditions in order to give exactly the same unconditioned certainty to everything that it can connect to this series; but rather it must itself proceed upwards synthetically from something conditioned in the series of conditions, in order to find the necessary conditions from which it can then progress upwards for the first time to a system that has universal validity.⁶⁶

Alternatively, a mediate justification would involve a *progressive* argument from a first principle. But no such principle is to be found:

An *analytical* proposition (whether it be either only a mark contained in the subject, or the whole subject that is posited as predicate—an *identical* proposition) cannot be used for this. To be sure, it would have first of all to have the required property of apodictic certainty; but nothing further can be derived from such a proposition and at the very least not a single made synthesis can be justified, which indeed constitutes the main point with which one is straightaway and alone concerned in philosophy. But a *synthetic* proposition also cannot be used for it. If it is a synthetic proposition *a posteriori*, then it has no universality and necessity. A synthetic proposition *a priori* would indeed have this property, but since philosophy itself, as we have seen above, must first determine what is *a priori*, and this determination can occur only by means of a synthesis, which also requires a proof, which itself must again be a synthesis and consequently would presuppose yet another new proof; then no proposition that is absolutely certain can be established here. There is therefore no proposition to be found in the whole compass of our entire knowledge that has the required apodictically unconditioned certainty, to ground such a system of our knowledge, that would be complete in all its parts, equal to the principle itself, fully indubitable and incontrovertibly certain.⁶⁷

66. Niethammer (1795), 23–24.

67. Niethammer (1795), 44.

At best, the project of mediate justification can be saved only if it is reinterpreted as circular rather than linear. The first principle must be adopted as a hypothesis, confirmed only through its ability to enable the derivation of the judgments of common understanding.

The options laid out by Niethammer may easily be seen as responses to the ambiguity problem discussed earlier. In Niethammer's view—and we may take him to represent a current of thought among Reinhold's former students—there is no way to satisfy *both* the ontic self-grounding requirement *and* the epistemic self-grounding requirement. Either one must abandon the former and adopt a regressive method of transcendental argumentation, or one must abandon the latter and adopt a progressive method that is hypothetical and can become affirmative only in virtue of its results.

The first option is pursued by several of Reinhold's former students and colleagues, notably by Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, who, prior to Reinhold's arrival, had been the first to teach Kantian philosophy at Jena. Beginning with a plurality of facts of consciousness or judgments of the common understanding, one regresses to the necessary conditions of their possibility. A first principle is employed to organize the facts of consciousness but not to ground them. The conception of transcendental arguments shared by these figures—as arguments that are supposed to regress from that which is undeniable to its necessary conditions—anticipates one contemporary conception of transcendental argument and seems less ambitious and hence more palatable than the conception developed by Fichte and variously rethought by Schelling and Hegel.⁶⁸

The distinction between these options amounts to a disambiguation that responds to the ambiguity of Reinhold's initial project. However, from the German idealist point of view, Niethammer has not got to the heart of the problem, which is the confusion of the transcendental with the empirical. For Niethammer's first option depends on abandoning altogether the attempt to ground the *a priori* possibility of experience in the absolute. In the first place, as Schultz and Maimon have made clear, if one assumes as a premise that there is experience in a thin sense that allows for epistemic self-grounding and universal acknowledgment, then there is no way to derive Kantian results—such as the categorial principles—through a re-

68. For a sympathetic characterization of Niethammer's circle in contrast to German idealists, see Ameriks (2000a), 63–66.

gressive transcendental argument. It reveals either ignorance of the debate initiated by Schultz or an unfortunate propensity for violence when one member of Niethammer's circle, Baron Franz Paul von Herbert, writes to another: "Kant's entire system can be expressed in the hypothetical proposition, 'If experience is, then . . . ' That experience is, is thereby presupposed, postulated, or however one calls it. Now if a skeptic were dumb and shameless enough to say, 'But is there experience?' there is really no answer for such a type other than a beating."⁶⁹ In the second place, a regressive transcendental argument can reach only conditions that are homogeneous with its conditioned premise. So no regressive transcendental argument can meet the Heterogeneity Requirement and reach an absolutely unconditioned condition. Every such argument must fail to ground the empirical in the transcendental and must remain within the empirical.

Must the German idealists, then, adopt Niethammer's second option? It has been suggested that Fichte does indeed adopt this option, regarding his first principle as a hypothesis to be confirmed by its results.⁷⁰ However, passages in which Fichte speaks of retrospective justification do not in fact prove that he adopts the second option. For in light of the challenge arising from the post-Kantian skepticisms of Jacobi and Maimon, even a first principle that is epistemically self-grounding would *also* need retrospective justification.⁷¹ As Maimon argues against the uncomprehending Reinhold, it is not enough to show the actuality of the putative first principle, for one must also show that it has actuality within experience, the transcendental grounding of which it therefore demonstrates.⁷² But the actuality of the principle within experience can only be known in retrospect, once the system has been completed through the derivation of the *a priori* conditions of experience and its objects. In any event, there is a third option, which Niethammer does not envisage and which Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel actually explore. The option is an attempt to preserve *both* epistemic self-

69. Cited in Frank (1997), 507.

70. See, for example, Rockmore (1994).

71. In an early passage from *Eigene Meditationen*, Fichte says that he can justify his first principle, and his entire system, only retrospectively, which is Kant's method. See Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3: 24. However, in a marginal note to that very passage—a note that I will discuss later in Chapter 6—Fichte suggests the idea of philosophical construction in intuition: a nonretrospective method of justification. It is not necessary to regard the marginal note as contradicting or retracting the passage to which it is attached. Through reflection on Maimon's challenge to Reinhold, Fichte understands that both prospective and retrospective justification are required.

72. See the Maimon–Reinhold correspondence in Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 199–266.

grounding *and* ontic self-grounding, while sacrificing another Reinholdian requirement: universal intelligibility and universal acknowledgment.

This sounds paradoxical. How can something be epistemically self-grounding or immediately certain, without winning universal acknowledgment? The German idealist response is that something can be immediately certain or self-evident *but manifest as such only to those who have satisfied certain preconditions*.⁷³ The situation is quite familiar. What is obvious to a mathematician, and does not require or perhaps even permit of proof, may not be obvious and even intelligible to a nonmathematician. The German idealists would think this analogy well-grounded. For, from a Kantian point of view, the mathematician constructs in pure sensible intuition, which is both immediate and purely formal, hence universally valid. And from a German idealist point of view, the philosopher also constructs the first principle in pure intuition, albeit of a nonsensible, nonmathematical kind.

Much needs to be done to make this analogy plausible, and I will say more about this subject in Chapter 5. For now, I note that Schelling eventually takes the further step of repudiating universal validity as a requirement to be met by the German idealist program. Whether this amounts to some kind of irrationalism, or only to a reconception of the claims of reason, will also be discussed in the next chapter.

For present purposes, I note that if one gives up the requirement of universal acknowledgment, then one must also abandon Reinhold's goal of decisively refuting both skepticism and dogmatism. Consequently, the German idealist response to skepticism and dogmatism *cannot* take the form of refutation. However, if the German idealists are to avoid being dogmatic and arbitrary in their claim to universal validity, then they must continue another aspect of Reinhold's project. They must undertake to *account* for the unintelligibility and lack of universal acknowledgment of his system, even if they think that complete transparency and consensus can never be attained. And the German idealists do in fact develop such accounts, of which we will hear more in Chapter 5.

4.6

So far, I have discussed difficulties brought out through consideration of Reinhold's first principle, although those difficulties also infect the char-

73. See section 10 of Fichte's "Second Introduction," Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 258–265.

acter of Reinhold's transcendental argument from that principle. Now I turn directly to problems concerning Reinhold's method of inference, focusing on problems that set the agenda for German idealist methodology after Reinhold.

Here it is helpful to consider some of the other objections raised by Schulze, Reinhold's most famous critic. As Maimon, Fichte, and Hegel point out, along with contemporary commentators, Schulze's own skepticism is pre-Kantian. He assumes that the problem of knowledge is to establish a correspondence between representations in the empirical sense and things outside the mind. Until this problem has been solved, skepticism remains the most reasonable position, and the idealism of both Kant and Reinhold seems to Schulze just another version of empirical idealism that confesses itself helpless in the face of skepticism. Although he is influenced by Hume, Schulze does not, like Maimon, develop a skepticism that is at once neo-Humean and post-Kantian. However, Schulze's book remains important not only because it gathers into one presentation many of the otherwise scattered objections raised against Kant and Reinhold, but also because it focuses on the inferential method of transcendental arguments, anticipating two of the most discussed objections to transcendental argument raised in the last four decades. Moreover, like Jacobi's pre-Kantian conception of the skeptical problem confronting Kant, Schulze's objections may be reformulated in an adequately post-Kantian way. These reformulated objections may be seen to set the agenda for transcendental methodology in the 1790s.

Schulze accuses both Kant and Reinhold of employing the same, problematic form of syllogistic argument, which may be presented as follows: Major Premise: (shared by Kant and Reinhold):

"Any two things that cannot be *thought* apart from one another can also not *be* apart from one another."⁷⁴

Minor Premise:

a and *b* cannot be thought apart;

(1) Kant:

"... the necessary synthetic judgments present in our knowledge can be represented by us as *possible* only if we take them to originate in the mind, from its mode of operation as determined *a priori*"⁷⁵

74. Schulze (1792), 99.

75. Schulze (1792), 140.

(2) Reinhold:

"the being and actuality of representations cannot be *thought* apart from the being and actuality of a faculty of representation⁷⁶ . . . [which is] the cause and ground of the actual presence of representations in us."⁷⁷

Conclusion:

Therefore, if *a* exists (which the skeptic does not deny, then *b* must also exist (which the skeptic has denied but must now admit);

(1) Kant:

"Therefore, also the necessary synthetic judgments, present in our knowledge can *actually have arisen* only in the mind, from its mode of operation as determined *a priori*."⁷⁸

(2) Reinhold:

"hence a faculty of representation must also exist objectively [as the cause and ground of the actual presence of representations in us], just as certainly as representations are present in us."⁷⁹

This is a useful syllogistic representation of one conception of transcendental argument. Schulze portrays Kant and Reinhold as arguing from what no skeptic denies (that we make synthetic *a priori* judgments, that we possess representations) to precisely the Transcendental Idealist thesis that the skeptic disputes (that synthetic *a priori* judgments are grounded in the mind, that representations are grounded in the faculty of representation). And the major premise attributed to Kant and Reinhold by Schulze makes essential use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, asserting in effect that if *x* can only be thought as grounded in *y*, then, if *x* exists, *y* must also exist as its sufficient reason. Schulze's criticisms of the major and minor premise can therefore be understood as criticisms of a certain strategy of grounding transcendental argument.

A. The Major Premise and the Actuality Problem

Schulze argues, first, that the use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in the major premise begs the question against Hume. The major premise assumes as certain just what the Humean skeptic doubts:

76. Schulze (1792), 99.

77. Schulze (1792), 97.

78. Schulze (1792), 140.

79. Schulze (1792), 99.

(1) that for anything present in our knowledge there is also objectively present a real ground and cause differing from it realiter; and, in general, that the principle of sufficient reason is valid not only for representations and their subjective combination, but also for things-in-themselves and in their objective interconnections; (2) that we are justified in inferring from the constitution of something as it is in our representations its objective constitution outside us.⁸⁰

To put the point in Kantian language, the major premise involves an inference from a merely *logical* use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (we have to *think* of *x* as grounded in *y*) to a *real* use of the principle (if *x* exists, it must *really exist* as grounded in *y*). But this inference simply begs the skeptic's question, for the skeptic calls into doubt precisely our right to make inferences from the way we must think to the way things really are. The Humean skeptic calls into doubt, more particularly, our right to infer from the premise that we must think in accordance with the Principle of Sufficient Reason to the conclusion that every event or state of affairs really has a necessary connection to an existent ground or cause.

What is more, Schulze argues, the major premise not only begs the very Humean question that Kant and Reinhold set out to answer, but it also "clearly contradicts the whole spirit of critical philosophy." For:

... this derivation of the necessary judgments from a thing-in-itself [i.e. the mind or faculty of representation as ground] ... presupposes a knowledge which, according to it [i.e., critical philosophy], should be totally impossible to man. For its most important principle and its most important result is that the categories "cause" and "actuality" can only be applied to empirical intuition if their application is to have any sense or reference. Since we cannot intuit, however, the alleged subject of representations but can only immediately perceive the alterations of the inner sense, as the critical philosophy concedes, it follows that this subject cannot belong to the domain of objects knowable by us. In other words, according to the critical philosophy's own claims, we cannot attribute either knowable and real actuality to it, or knowable and real causality.⁸¹

In other words, the major premise makes real—not merely logical—use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in order to reach a conclusion that is not only *a priori* but also *affirmatively synthetic*.

But Kant and Reinhold both profess to believe that no synthetic judg-

80. Schulze (1792), 133.

81. Schulze (1792), 155.

ment employing the categories is possible without an intuition, whether pure or empirical. Kant also claims that we have no pure intuition of the mind or faculty of representation as transcendental ground determining the forms of judgment; we have only empirical sensible intuitions of the mind as determined in our inner sense. So it would appear that neither Kant nor Reinhold is entitled to make a synthetic *a priori* judgment employing the categories of "cause" and "actuality" about the mind or faculty of representation as a transcendently determining, *actual cause*. At most, they are entitled to conclude that we cannot help but think in accordance with a synthetic *a priori* demand. Whether the demand is actually met is another matter entirely, about which they are entitled to draw no conclusion.

I will call this the Actuality Problem.⁸² It can be regarded as an accusation that transcendental arguments are inappropriately first-personal and hubristic. For they establish at most that we cannot help but think in a certain way, not that what we must think is true. To think that reality must meet the necessities of our thinking is hubristic.

More recently Barry Stroud has raised a parallel problem.

Kant thought that he could argue from the necessary conditions of thought and experience to the falsity of "problematic idealism" and so to the actual existence of the external world of material objects, and not merely to the fact that we believe there is a world, or that as far as we can tell there is.

An examination of some recent attempts to argue in analogous fashion suggests that, without invoking a verification principle which automatically renders superfluous any indirect argument, the most that could be proved by a consideration of the necessary conditions of language is that, for example, we must *believe* that there are material objects and other minds in order for us to be able to speak meaningfully at all.⁸³

Like Schulze, Stroud argues that transcendental arguments (in this case, those of Strawson and Sydney Shoemaker) can prove at best that we *must believe* something. Stroud also points out that there is a gap between a

82. In Franks (1999), I call this the Reality Problem, but I am shifting terminology here in order to cohere with the Kantian and German idealist distinction between actuality and reality, where the latter is synonymous with "essence" or "explanatory priority."

83. Stroud (1968), 256. For more recent reflections, see Stroud (1994) and (1999). Stroud's challenge to transcendental argumentation occupies many of the contributors to Stern (1999).

conclusion about what we must believe and the thesis that the skeptic doubts, which concerns what *actually exists*.⁸⁴

There are, however, two noteworthy differences between Schulze and Stroud. First, Stroud regards Strawson and Shoemaker as attempting to bridge the gap between what we must believe and what must really be the case by invoking a *theory of meaning*: a verification principle that says, in effect, that if we are to meaningfully engage in the practice of belief-formation and concept-ascription with respect to a kind of object, it must be possible to verify that objects of that kind actually exist. Considerations about meaningfulness in the contemporary sense are, however, entirely foreign to Schulze and his contemporaries. Appealing instead to the Kantian *theory of judgment*,⁸⁵ Schulze believes that the only way to bridge the gap would be to possess the capacity for intuition—for immediate reception of the actuality—of the mind as it is in itself, for only a judgment relating concepts by means of an intuition is genuinely synthetic.

Second, as Stroud argues, acceptance of the verification principle would render transcendental argument redundant, at least for the refutation of skepticism.⁸⁶ For, if one wished to refute a skeptical doubt about the existence of, say, other minds, one would need only to show that we do form beliefs about other minds and then to invoke the verification principle. One would not need to show that our forming beliefs about other minds

84. Stroud does not mean to suggest that Kant's transcendental arguments invoke a verification principle. His point is rather that in some more recent transcendental arguments, the verification principle plays the role played in Kant's arguments by transcendental idealism: bridging the gap between what is necessarily thought and empirical reality.

85. See Rosen (1988) for a helpful discussion of the difference between Kant's concern with the conditions for the possibility of making cognitively significant judgments and Strawson's concern with the conditions for the possibility of employing concepts intelligibly. The distinction between these conditions is essential to Kant's criticism of traditional metaphysics, which he regards as employing concepts intelligibly but as failing to make cognitively significant judgments, and for which he may therefore seek practical significance. Rosen points out that the blindness to the distinction in Strawson (1966) reflects the influence of verificationism, which denies the very existence of such a distinction. Putnam (1995) develops the charge that Strawson's Kant interpretation is limited by the influence of verificationism.

86. Transcendental arguments might still have the function of refuting conventionalism. For these two functions—refuting skepticism and refuting conventionalism—are independent. Strawson appears to have accepted, after reading Stroud, that, since he does not wish to invoke a verification principle, his transcendental arguments refute conventionalism by tracing necessary connections; they do not refute skepticism by showing that, say, other minds, actually exist, but they do demonstrate the idleness of skeptical doubt by showing that we necessarily believe that other minds exist, so that we could not abandon the beliefs that skepticism challenges.

is a necessary condition for the possibility of the meaningfulness of our discourse in general. In contrast, it does not seem that possession of a pure intuition of the mind as it is in itself would render transcendental argument redundant. If, as the German idealist thinks, the point of transcendental argument is to *ground* finite intelligibility in an absolutely unconditioned condition, then possession of the requisite intuition alone would ground only the knowledge that there is such a condition. Transcendental argumentation would *still* be required in order to trace the detailed ways in which the condition grounds the *a priori* possibility of experience and its objects.

B. The Minor Premise and the Uniqueness Problem

Schulze also attacks the minor premises that he ascribes to Kant and Reinhold. These premises assert that it is impossible to think of synthetic *a priori* judgments apart from a transcendently determining ground in the mind and that it is impossible to think of representations as present in the mind without a determining ground in the faculty of representation. The following passage refers particularly to Kant's minor premise, but it may easily be applied to Reinhold's:

And just as fallacious as the *major* of the syllogism by which the *Critique of Reason* [sic] proves that the necessary synthetic judgments spring from the mind and lie in us *a priori*, is its *minor*. It is simply not true that, in order to be thought as possible, these judgments *have* to be thought as present *a priori*, and as originating in the mind. Because the human understanding, at the present level of its culture, can represent to itself the possibility of something in just one way, it does not follow in principle, nor with any certitude whatever, that it will be able to think it in only that way at all times, even at some future age when it will have acquired greater maturity.⁸⁷

In short, Kant and Reinhold claim that it is possible to explain synthetic *a priori* judgments or representations as such *in only one way*. But with what possible right do they make this claim? Even if it is true that no human being who has ever lived can offer an alternative explanation, who are Kant

87. Schulze (1792), 142.

and Reinhold to say that no future human being, operating with all the advantages of a future age, will ever arrive at an alternative?

Once again, the problem arises from the use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason to argue from some given *x* to its ground or sufficient reason, *y*. For it is hardly uncommon for an event or state of affairs, under some descriptions, to have more than one *possible* ground.⁸⁸ In order to argue from the actuality of *x* to the *actuality* of *y* as *x*'s ground, one has to show that *y* is not only sufficient but also *necessary* for the actuality of *x*. In short, one has to make the strong claim that *y* is the *uniquely* sufficient reason for *x*.

Again, this problem—henceforth the Uniqueness Problem—may be regarded as an accusation that transcendental arguments are inappropriately first-personal and hubristic. For, if I am convinced by such an argument, I am entitled to conclude only that *I*—or at most that *we*, the members of a group subject to certain conditions—cannot conceive any alternative sufficient reason. To assume that nobody will ever conceive an alternative is hubristic.

Once again, too, a parallel to Schulze's objection has resurfaced in more recent debates about transcendental arguments, most famously in the writings of Stephan Körner, who argues that, in Kant's *Transcendental Analytic*, "Sufficient conditions are not distinguished from sufficient and necessary conditions," that Kant fails even to attempt to prove the unique sufficiency of his proposed "schema," and even that no such proof is possible, rendering what Körner calls "transcendental deductions" impossible.⁸⁹

4.7

Fichte's review of *Aenesidemus* may seem to suggest that Fichte has quick and easy responses to both the Uniqueness and Actuality Problems raised by Schulze. But in fact those problems set the agenda for the methodological developments not only of Fichte himself but also of Schelling and Hegel. This is not to say, however, that Fichte's contribution is negligible. Behind the scenes, in private notes, and in between the lines of his *Aenesidemus* review, he also *reformulates* the problems in a way that is consonant with his own understanding of the challenge facing transcendental philos-

88. According to Kant (1900-), KrV, A368, this is always the case.

89. Körner (1967).

ophy after Reinhold, an understanding shaped particularly by Maimon. Moreover, in the various versions of his Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte develops interesting lines of response to the reformulated problems.

We can see Fichte's reformulation of Schulze's problems in action in a marginal note to Fichte's private notes from the breakthrough winter of 1793–1794:

These considerations expose the false appearance of Maimon's accusations against Reinhold: "that he infers that something must be from [the premise] that he can think something." This something, on which the discussion turns, is indeed only facts of our mind [*Thatsachen unsers Geistes*]. This Reinhold thinks. But how do his *thoughts* agree in general with the *actions* [*Handlungen*] of the spirit; how may such an agreement be demonstrated? That is really the question: for the object of his philosophy is not the thing in itself, but rather the representing of the thing. The discussion does not concern things outside this representing. How, then, is such an agreement possible? Is the investigation demanded by Aenesidemus possible; how and how far is it possible to trace the constitutive parts of our faculty of knowledge? Is not construction possible in the elementary philosophy: is it not possible to give an inner intuition that explains and proves thoughts. If that happens, then Aenesidemus would be refuted.⁹⁰

This passage begins by mentioning Maimon and ends by mentioning Aenesidemus, whose identity Fichte does not yet know. According to a generally accepted view, Fichte is really talking about Schulze throughout the passage; he writes "Maimon" either by mistake or because he mistakenly thinks that Maimon is the author of *Aenesidemus*.⁹¹ In my opinion, however, it is not at all clear that Fichte is making a mistake. For it is possible to read the passage so that both figures are relevant.

After all, both Maimon and Schulze can be said to accuse Reinhold of arguing from the possibility of a certain thought to the necessity of its actualization. In Schulze's case, this accusation can be divided into the two

90. Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3: 23–24n.

91. Kabitx (1902), 62 n.2, and Stolzenberg (1986), 16, argue that Fichte's reference here to Maimon rather than Aenesidemus (i.e., Schulze) is a slip of the pen. This seems to me unwarranted because Maimon makes more sophisticated versions of Schulze's objections, and because the idea of responding to these objections by developing a method of philosophical construction is almost certainly inspired by Maimon. On the latter point, see Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 34.

problems I have discussed: the Actuality Problem concerns the inference from thought to being, and the Uniqueness Problem concerns the claim that Reinhold's thinking is not merely possible but necessary. In his correspondence with Reinhold, we can see Maimon raising *inter alia* the same problems but with a characteristically Maimonian twist. Thus, for Maimon, the Actuality Problem is not merely the question whether transcendental principles have any actuality, for he thinks it can be shown that they have actuality in pure mathematics. Rather, the Actuality Problem is primarily the question whether transcendental principles have actuality *within everyday life and contemporary natural science*. And the Uniqueness Problem is not merely the question whether, at some point in time, someone might explain experience or consciousness differently from Kant and Reinhold. It is the question whether, even if the Kantian and Reinholdian explanations are the only alternatives available to us, they are necessary for genuine reasons, or rather because we are subject to a *psychological* illusion that is naturally explainable but nevertheless unavoidable.

Maimon's criticism of Reinhold has a "false appearance," I suggest, because it looks like Schulze's criticism, which is based in part on what Fichte considers a misunderstanding of Kant and the German idealist project. Unlike Schulze, however, Maimon is an acute reader of Kant, who is one of the first to undertake the synthesis of Kant and Spinoza. Yet Maimon too is a harsh critic of Reinhold, who makes criticisms that look like Schulze's. Underneath the "false appearance," then, lie problems that, once reformulated, pose genuine challenges for anyone who, like Fichte, wants to continue the German idealist project pioneered by Reinhold. The association of Maimon and Schulze in this passage suggests that Fichte might not have realized this, had he read only *Aenesidemus* and not Maimon.

Thus Fichte argues that Schulze's version of the Actuality Problem presupposes a pre-Kantian view of truth as correspondence to things in themselves. Specifically, Schulze seems to think that transcendental claims about the necessary laws of the mind can be shown to be true only if they can be shown to correspond to the nature of the mind as a thing in itself. But, Fichte argues, whereas pre-Kantian rational psychology seeks to understand the mind as a thinking *thing*, transcendental philosophy substitutes for that goal the understanding of the mind as autonomous, law-governed *activity*. One aspect of this revolution is that the truth and justification of philosophical claims must be understood in a new way. Here Fichte is

surely right. But he also makes the more problematic claim that, in transcendental philosophy, there is no room for a gap between necessary thinking and truth:

"Kant says that the mind provides the foundation of certain forms of synthetic judgment. Here he obviously is presupposing *that* these forms require a foundation and is, therefore, already presupposing that which is supposed to be in question, the validity of the causal law. He presupposes that these forms must have a *real* ground." But if one says merely that we are required to seek a foundation for these forms and to place this foundation in our mind (and nothing more is being said), then the principle of sufficient reason is at first being employed as merely logically valid. But since that which is thereby established exists only as a thought, then one might think that the *logical* foundation of a thought is at the same time its *real* or *existential* foundation.⁹²

This is parallel to a tempting contemporary response to Stroud's objection: if we truly *cannot help* but think of *p* as conditioned by *q*, then why should we worry that perhaps *p* is *not* conditioned by *q*? Even if it is logically possible that *p* is not conditioned by *q*, this is not a possibility of which we can so much as conceive! Certainly, it is not a possibility that we could ever recognize as actual, and so it is not a possibility that we need to worry about excluding.⁹³

Whatever the contemporary merits of such a response, Fichte's version seems obviously problematic. The first problem is that, in this case, Schulze seems to be more accurate than Fichte about Kant. For, as we saw in Chapter 1, Kant fully acknowledges that reason demands certain beliefs of us—such as the belief in a transcendental ground of the world as a sum of appearances—about whose correspondence to things as they are in themselves we can, however, say nothing whatsoever. Kant does not explicitly raise the question whether the mind has *in itself* the faculties as-

92. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 53; Fichte (1988), 68. The passages within quotation marks, in this quotation and the next, are Fichte's expressions of the skeptic's position to which he takes himself to be responding.

93. It should be said, however, that the prevalent contemporary response is to concede Stroud's objection and to espouse a more modest conception of the task of transcendental arguments, viewing them not as truth- or world-directed, but rather as in some sense self-directed—as fit to show something about me or us, about my or our beliefs or capacities, but not to show something about the world. See Peacocke (1989), the contributions of Cassam and Stern to Stern (1999), and Stern (2000).

cribed to it in transcendental philosophy, the question of the relation between the noumenal self and the transcendental self. But how can Fichte exclude the question?

The answer, I suggest, is that Fichte presupposes Holistic Monism, which he probably also ascribes—mistakenly—to Kant. For Kant, each rational agent is an individual thing in itself, one among many, and there is a genuine question about the individual natures of such things, albeit one that can be answered only from a practical point of view. This is the upshot of Kant's Monadic Individualism. Consequently, it is difficult to see how Kant can exclude the question about the relation between the transcendental self and the noumenal self. For Fichte, however, there are no individual things in themselves, no finite absolutes. Our individual selves are modes of the absolute, which he understands as *the I*, something of which I am aware in first-personal self-awareness, although it is unique and universal, and not identical with my individual self. The absolute is not a Leibnizian individual with intrinsic properties that differ from the properties it manifests in interaction with other individuals. Rather, the absolute is the immanent principle of the sum-total of reality. Consequently, for Fichte, in contrast to Kant, there are no intrinsic properties or individual natures to which truths must correspond. Since the absolute is immanent, it is what it is only in relation to the whole of which it is the ground. So transcendental arguments that characterize the absolute in relation to what it grounds are fully adequate ways to know it. The absolute has no intrinsic properties to which transcendentially demonstrated theses could fail to correspond.

Still, this is hardly a definitive answer to the Actuality Problem. Maimon, who is one of the first to consider the project of synthesizing Kant and Spinoza, raises his own version of the problem, and Fichte explicitly addresses that version in the *Jena Wissenschaftslehre*. Maimon's version is not the problem whether transcendental principles have any actuality. He thinks that they have actuality within pure mathematics, which distinguishes him from Hume. Rather, Maimon is concerned with the problem: even if transcendental principles have *some* actuality, and even if one succeeds in deriving subordinate transcendental principles of the possibility of experience from some absolute first principle, can this system be shown to have any *actuality within everyday life and contemporary natural science*? If not, then, a German idealist system will be nothing more than "a castle in the air," a piece of empty formalism with only hypothetical validity.

When Fichte says in his *Aenesidemus* review that the absolute ground “thereby established exists only as a thought,” it is unclear whether he has understood this problem. For if Fichte means by this that the first principle and its subordinates are accessible only via their explanatory roles in transcendental arguments, then he is vulnerable to Maimon’s version of the Actuality Problem. An explanation that appeals to an explanatory factor characterized only in terms of its explanatory role is a pseudo-explanation, like the appeal to dormitive virtue to explain the soporific effect of opium. But, in fact, Fichte himself later raises this objection, and responds to it. Already in his marginal note, he realizes that it is not enough to say in response to Schulze, as Reinhold may, that it is mistaken to ask whether the system agrees with the mind as a thing in itself. For there is a reformulated version of the question: can the system be shown to agree with the actual “facts of our mind”? That is, can the principles appealed to in the system be shown to have actuality within the everyday life we share? Fichte’s response seems to be that the acts and structures discovered through transcendental philosophy are not characterized solely in terms of their explanatory roles, for they also play roles in the formulation of principles that are normative within everyday morality.⁹⁴

To the Uniqueness Problem, Fichte responds thus in the *Aenesidemus* review: “It by no means follows from the fact that we can explain and conceive something in only one way at present that we will never be able to conceive it differently.” This would be an appropriate remark to make against an empirical proof, but not against an *a priori* proof from first principles.⁹⁵

Here Fichte’s point seems to be that Schulze’s objection is invited by Reinhold’s method, which fails to establish itself unambiguously as transcendental. Since Schulze himself cannot grasp the idea of a *a priori* proof within philosophy, and thinks that philosophical grounding is a more abstract version of empirical explanation, which can at best be probable, and since Reinhold does not disabuse Schulze of this misconception, it would seem that the Uniqueness Problem can be set aside. The challenge is to develop an adequately transcendental method, and then the Uniqueness Problem will have been solved along the way.

94. See 321–325 below for discussion of the relationship between the transcendental and the normative in Fichte.

95. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 53.

Once again, reading Maimon helps Fichte to see that reformulation yields a genuine challenge. It is not enough to say that the question concerns "the facts of our mind." For even if Reinhold—or Fichte, or some other German idealist—succeeded in giving the only description we could give of those facts, hence of the chief fact of consciousness expressed by the first principle, and of all the subordinate facts expressed by subordinate principles, there would still be a genuine question whether our inability to specify any other first principle, or to make any other inferences from it, is anything more than the result of a *psychological illusion*, which is naturally explainable yet nevertheless unavoidable. This is especially pressing if one thinks that the necessity of an adequate transcendental argument must be synthetic, not analytic. And German idealists have good reason to think this.

To see why, it is helpful to begin by considering a contemporary response to Körner's version of the Uniqueness Problem. The response is to point out that contemporary transcendental arguments proceed not by showing that certain alternatives to the putatively necessary condition are incoherent, but rather by showing that the *negation* of the putatively necessary condition is incoherent, so that *any* alternative will be.⁹⁶ Thus, for example, Strawson argues for his purified version of the Transcendental Deduction by bringing out the incoherence of the sense datum hypothesis—the hypothesis that all experience might be such that its *esse* is its *percipi*.⁹⁷ But that hypothesis is the negation of the thesis that at least some experience is objective and has an *esse* distinct from its *percipi*. So, if the sense datum hypothesis is incoherent, then the objectivity of some experience is a necessary condition for there to be any experience whatsoever. Given this method of argument by *reductio ad absurdum*, uniqueness is not a problem.

Reductio arguments of this sort might be either analytic or synthetic, depending on whether the putative incoherence of any alternative to one's inference is *logical* incoherence—that is, contradictoriness. If the incoherence is of some other—synthetic—sort, then some account of that kind of incoherence will be owed. In particular, one will owe an explanation of our inability to think the negation of the condition that is not merely psychological.

But German idealists have reasons *not* to respond to the Uniqueness

96. For this point and a more general discussion of Körner, see Schaper (1972) and (1974).

97. See Strawson (1966).

Problem by reducing the negation of a putative condition to absurdity. Recall why Kant refuses to give what he calls the *apagogic* method the central place in philosophy that it has in mathematics.⁹⁸ According to Kant, philosophical proofs must never be apagogical but must rather be *ostensive*:

The direct or ostensive proof is, in all kinds of cognition, that which is combined with the conviction of truth and simultaneously with insight into the sources of its truth; the apagogical proof, on the contrary, can produce certainty, to be sure, but never comprehensibility of the truth in regard to its connection with the grounds of its possibility. Hence the latter are more of an emergency aid than a procedure which satisfies all the aims of reason.⁹⁹

An apagogical proof that the negation of *p* is in some way incoherent cannot show us *why* *p* is true—cannot show us the *ground* of the possibility of *p*. So an apagogical proof cannot satisfy reason's essential demand for ground-ness.

More importantly, Kant thinks that in philosophy such proofs cannot even show us conclusively *that* something is true:

Apagogic proof, however, can be allowed only in those sciences where it is impossible to *substitute* that which is subjective in our representations for that which is objective, namely the cognition of what is in the object. Where the latter is the dominant concern, however, then it must frequently transpire that the opposite of a certain proposition either simply contradicts the subjective conditions of thought but not the object, or else that both propositions contradict each other only under a subjective condition that is falsely held to be objective, and that since the condition is false, both of them can be false, without it being possible to infer the truth of one from the falsehood of the other. . . . The transcendental attempts of pure reason . . . are all conducted within the real medium of dialectical illusion, i.e., the subjective which offers itself to or even forces itself upon reason as objective in its premises. Now here it simply cannot be allowed that assertions of synthetic propositions be justified by the refutation of their opposites.¹⁰⁰

Philosophical proof is called for precisely within the domain proper to dialectical illusion, where the subjective can appear in the guise of the

98. See Förster (1989), 6, and Guyer (1987), 465 n. 6.

99. Kant (1900–), KrV, A789–790/B817–818.

100. Kant (1900–), KrV, A791–792/B819–820.

objective, because here experience cannot provide the touchstone of objective reality as it does for empirical (and even mathematical) cognition. It is precisely because there is no such touchstone that we must confront Agrippan skepticism in the first place. Consequently, even if one succeeds in proving that the negation of p is absurd, one is not entitled to infer that p . The negation of p might still be true, if the reason for its absurdity lies in some subjective condition of our thinking, not in the object. Alternatively, both p and its negation might be false, if they share a false presupposition.

Consequently, there is a good reason for German idealists not to employ apagogic proofs in order to establish necessary conditions, but to employ ostensive proofs instead. One possibility, which I have mentioned before and will discuss in Chapter 5, seems to be first considered by Fichte in the marginal note quoted above: "Is not construction possible in the elementary philosophy: is it not possible to give an inner intuition that explains and proves thoughts. If that happens, then Aenesidemus would be refuted."¹⁰¹ The thought is at least that philosophical construction could solve the Uniqueness Problem

Note that the problem must be solved on two levels: construction must yield *both* a unique first principle *and* a uniquely necessary inference at each stage in the development of the system from the first principle. But even to show this is not enough. For the necessities in question must also be shown to be rational, not merely effects of psychology. William James claimed to have succeeded only once in understanding Hegelian logic: when under the influence of nitrous oxide. As soon as the gas wore off, so did the illusion of comprehension, leading James to speculate that Hegelians may suffer from psychological abnormalities based in chemical abnormalities of their brains!¹⁰² Whether or not James meant this suggestion seriously, it brings out the importance of the Maimonian version of the Uniqueness Problem for the German idealists, who depart from Reinhold by abandoning his pursuit of universal acknowledgment and even his claim to universal intelligibility.

Does Fichte mean to suggest, in this passage, that construction in philosophical intuition can solve the Actuality Problem too? If the intuition in question is accessible only within philosophy, then this seems to be a non-

101. Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3: 23–24n.

102. See James (1882), 206–208.

starter, once the Actuality Problem is construed in a Maimonian way. However, as I have mentioned, Fichte does not think that the intuition in question is accessible only within philosophy. He thinks that it is accessible within everyday moral life, where both the first principle and its derivatives are intuited. If, for Kant, the actuality of transcendental principles is secured through the fact of the *mathematical*, which is both presupposed in everyday sense perception and made explicit in mathematical physics, for Fichte it is the fact of *morality*, presupposed in philosophy and made explicit in everyday life, that plays that role. For others, this role is played by art or religion.

4.8

I have sought to convey some sense of Reinhold's achievement in his pioneering version of German idealism. It might be said that *all* the conceptions of transcendental argument developed in response to criticisms of Reinhold are already anticipated by Reinhold himself. But that is the source of the criticism: incompatible conceptions are forced to coexist within Reinhold's system, with the effect of systematic ambiguity.

Consequently, as we have seen, Reinhold's system brings us to a crossroads. One group chooses to pursue transcendental arguments that regress from putatively self-evident facts of consciousness to their homogeneous conditions. Another—the German idealists—chooses to pursue arguments that progress from a constitutive act to conditioned that are heterogeneous to it. Whatever its difficulties may be, only the latter choice, I have argued, could offer any hope of responding to Agrippan and post-Kantian skepticism. But this means that German idealist transcendental methods are not going to resemble those explored under the name of transcendental arguments in contemporary philosophy, which are closer to the arguments undertaken by members of the Niethammer circle and their allies.

To take the second road is also, I have argued, to abandon Reinhold's goal of universal intelligibility and universal acknowledgment. This makes it all the more pressing to undertake another project pioneered by Reinhold in his investigation of Kant's reception: to account for one's failure to be universally intelligible, to explain the necessity of one's obscurity.

Finally, I have argued that the methodology of the German idealists must confront some formidable challenges. These issue not directly from Schulze's objections to Reinhold but rather from Fichte's reformulation of

those objections, under the influence of Maimon. Thus the agenda has been set for the development of the German idealist system: to find a uniquely necessary, absolute first principle, heterogeneous with everything empirical, yet with demonstrable actuality; and to progressively derive from this principle, in uniquely necessary steps, the *a priori* conditions of experience and its objects, while demonstrating that these conditions have actuality within experience. If realized, this program would amount to a transcendental grounding of experience in an absolute first principle that recognizes at the same time the mutual closure of the empirical and transcendental structures of grounding, such that the former is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma while the latter is not. The challenges are formidable. As is the case with many ambitious philosophical programs, however, there is much to be learned not only from success but also from the specificities of failure.

The Fact of Reason and the Standpoint of German Idealism

Objects of concepts whose objective reality can be proved are matters of fact (*res facti*). (This may be done by pure reason or by experience, and in the former case either from theoretical or from practical data of reason; but in all cases it must be done by means of an intuition corresponding to these data.) Examples of matters of fact are the mathematical properties of magnitudes (in geometry), since they admit of a priori exhibition for the theoretical use of reason . . . It is very remarkable, however that even a rational idea is to be found among the matters of fact (even though it is intrinsically impossible to exhibit rational ideas in intuition, and hence also intrinsically impossible to prove theoretically that they are possible): the idea of freedom; the reality of this idea, as a special kind of causality (the concept of which would be transcendent if we considered it theoretically), can be established through practical laws of pure reason and, in conformity with these, in actual acts, and hence in experience. Among all the ideas of pure reason this is the only one whose object is a matter of fact and must be included among the *scibilia*.

—Kant (1900–), KU, 5:468

The beginning and end of all philosophy is freedom!

—Schelling (1856–1861), UMF, 1/1:177

Moreover, the scope of Kant's practical postulate is too narrow, for he limits it entirely to belief in God and immortality; but we will see that consciousness in its entirety is included within this postulate.

—Fichte (1964–), WLm, IV/2:139.

From the mistaken view that the inadequacy of finite categories to express truth entails the impossibility of objective cognition, we derive a justification for pronouncing and denouncing according to our feelings and subjective opinions. Assurances present themselves in place of proofs, along with stories about all the "facts" [*Tatsachen*] that are to be found in "consciousness"; and the more uncritical they are, the more they count as "pure" . . . But philosophy itself experiences its worst fate at the hands of those enemies when they deal with it directly themselves, both interpreting it and passing judgment on it. It is the *Factum* of the physical or the spiritual, but especially of religious vitality

too, that is misshaped through the reflection that is incapable of grasping it. For itself, however, this interpreting has the sense of raising this *Factum* for the first time into something-known, and the difficulty lies in this passage from the matter to cognition that is produced by meditating upon it. In science itself, this difficulty is no longer present. For the *Factum* of philosophy is cognition already elaborated; so the interpreting can only be a "thinking-over" in the sense that it is a *further* thinking that *comes later*. But the uncritical understanding that we are discussing proves to be just as unfaithful in its naked apprehension of the idea determinately expressed. It has so little difficulty or doubt about the fixed presuppositions that it contains that it is even incapable of repeating what the bare *Factum* of the philosophical idea is.

—Hegel (1970), EL, 8:16–17.

5.1

There is reason, on the one hand, *not* to designate as transcendental arguments the arguments developed by German idealists. After what has been said in Chapter 4, a German idealist system should not be expected, to resemble the arguments known as transcendental arguments in contemporary philosophy.¹ The Kantian model for these arguments is the Refutation of Idealism, an argument intended to refute a conception of mind that underlies what is now known as Cartesian skepticism, by regressing from a premise that the conception acknowledges to a conclusion negating the conception. In light of the problems to which German idealists are responding, they should not model their arguments on the Refutation, first, because they are not primarily concerned with *Cartesian* skepticism but rather with *Agrippan* skepticism and some of its descendants, such as the problem of simultaneously meeting the Dualistic Demand and the Monistic Demand, and the problem of nihilism; second, because they do not seek to *refute* skepticism, although they are everywhere responsive to it; and, third, because no regressive argument could yield the absolute first principle in which they are interested.²

1. I do not exclude the possibility that some piece of German idealist argumentation may lend itself to presentation in the form of a contemporary transcendental argument. What I deny is that this is the *primary* form their arguments can take, in light of the problems to which they are responding. To some extent, Kant's own situation is similar. For his arguments do not and cannot primarily take the apagogic form of the Refutation of Idealism. However, the thesis that our capacity for determination of what is immediately given in inner sense depends on our capacity for determination of what is immediately given in outer sense, which is implicit in the nonapagogic argument of the Analytic of Principles, may be put into apagogic form. This is what Kant does in the B-edition when he adds the Refutation to the text.

2. This should not be taken to imply either that the German idealists reject the central point

On the other hand, there is good reason to use the term *transcendental arguments* with respect to German idealism. In at least two respects, German idealist argumentation inherits distinctive features of what Kant calls the transcendental. The arguments in question are, after all, intended to explain the possibility of the *a priori* conditions of experience. Furthermore, they involve the taking up of a standpoint that is distinguished, on the one hand, from the empirical standpoint of everyday and scientific practices of judgment and, on the other hand, from the transcendent standpoint of pre-Kantian philosophy. As I have argued in Chapter 4, the crucial importance of this last point emerges above all from criticism of Reinhold's pioneering efforts.

What is it, then, to take up the transcendental standpoint? I will argue in this chapter that, here too, a Kantian model is under transformation: the Deduction of Freedom via the fact of reason in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This deduction at first provides direct guidance for the German idealist understanding of taking up the required standpoint, and then becomes the basis for significant transformations, without ever losing its relevance.

It is clear why the second *Critique* should be relevant. In the Third Antinomy, only the logical possibility—that is, the noncontradictoriness—of an absolutely unconditioned ground has been shown, not the real possibility, let alone the actuality of divine and human freedom, of grounding that escapes the Agrippan trilemma. Thus Kant's synthetic commitment to the in itself remains *hypothetical*: we must think of the transcendently real ground of appearances in certain ways, on the *supposition* of intelligibility or of the actuality of reason. Only through the fact of reason does the actuality of freedom and reason show itself. Only thus does the synthetic commitment to the in itself become *categorical*—a matter for belief and cognition, not merely an ideal for regulative employment, although—as Kant always adds—“only in a practical respect.” Here Kant seems to suggest that, at least in its practical division, philosophy must take account in an unprecedented way of the fact that “a rational being . . . has two standpoints from which he can regard himself and cognize laws for the use of

of Kant's Refutation or that there is no passage in any German idealist text that may be put into the form of a contemporary transcendental argument intended, like the Refutation, to undermine a conception of the mind and its self-knowledge that gives rise to Cartesian skepticism.

powers and consequently for all his actions,"³ and that at least practical philosophy should take up the standpoint of autonomy for the first time. So it should not be surprising that German idealists, who seek to carry out a metaphysical deduction of the categories from the idea of God—a project envisaged but never carried out by Kant—and who seek to do so from a distinctively transcendental standpoint, should inherit some version of the deduction whereby Kant shows that idea to have actuality.

Yet, appeal to the Deduction of Freedom via the fact of reason does not sound promising. For it is extremely unclear what the fact of reason is and in what sense. Kant intends a genuine Deduction of Freedom. Some contemporary interpreters see Kant's appeal to a fact as an *alternative* to a deduction—either as a modest retreat from an earlier philosophical ambition or as an unfortunate return to pre-critical dogmatism. Indeed, Fichte himself seems to criticize the appeal to facts of consciousness—*Tatsachen der Bewusstseins*—as dogmatic, and Schelling is repelled by the way in which Kant's practical vindication of God and immortality allowed his teachers at Tübingen to pour the old wine of Christian doctrine into new, Kantian bottles. Decades later, Hegel still polemicizes against any appeal to facts of consciousness.⁴

But what these criticisms of Kant's Deduction of Freedom show—like German idealist criticisms of the Metaphysical Deduction—is how important it is for the German idealist program to get the deduction right and how far they think their contemporaries have strayed from Kant's *actual* strategy or, perhaps, from what we might call Kant's *optimal* strategy: the strategy that has the most philosophical promise and that is suggested by Kant's language, although he himself may not express or even grasp it with complete clarity.

In this chapter, I will first discuss Kant's Deduction of Freedom in the second *Critique*, distinguishing the interpretations rejected by the German idealists from one they could accept, an interpretation focusing on the active taking up of the pertinent standpoint. Then I will develop some implications of this deduction for the obscurity of transcendental philosophy, and I will show how Fichte employs Kant's deduction as a model in his Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*.

3. Kant (1900–), GMM, 4: 452.

4. See the preface to the second, 1827 edition of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, cited above as an epigram.

5.2

As Ameriks has argued, Kant's appeal to the fact of reason in the second *Critique* represents a "great reversal" in his thinking about the justification of morality.⁵ For some fifteen years, Kant had sought a deduction of the moral law from practical freedom, which he had sought to deduce in turn from the spontaneity of our theoretical cognition. Around 1785–1788, however, Kant had realized that no such deductive strategy could work. For theoretical spontaneity does not entail autonomy—the ability to give oneself an unconditional practical law expressive of nothing more and nothing less than one's rationality—but practical spontaneity does entail autonomy.

In the second *Critique*, Kant expresses his realization in the form of what Allison calls the Reciprocity Thesis: "freedom and unconditional practical law reciprocally imply one another."⁶ His argument for this thesis shows, once again, his abiding interest in maintaining *both* that theoretical reasoning within everyday and natural scientific practices of judgment is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma, although it is genuine reasoning nonetheless, *and* that there must be some form of reasoning that escapes the trilemma.

First consider the claim that practical freedom is a sufficient condition for being bound by the moral law. Kant's argument for this claim assumes his incompatibilist view that every imputable action is the effect of a practically spontaneous cause, a choice that is free in the sense that the person responsible *could have done otherwise*. Kant further thinks that every time I make such a choice, I expose myself to a *request for a reason*. You may ask me, "Why, when you could have done otherwise, do you choose to initiate *that* causal series?"

It is Kant's view that I regard myself as a practically free self who could have done otherwise, not only when I act, but also whenever I *recognize something as a reason-for-acting*. To recognize a reason is to *freely adopt* that reason, without being causally determined to do so. You may therefore ask me, not only why I act as I do, but also why I regard my reason-for-acting as a reason, when I could have done otherwise. Consequently, every action

5. Ameriks (1982), 226. For an account of Kant's quest for a deduction of the moral law, see "The Concept of Moral Insight and the Kant's Doctrine of the Fact of Reason" in Henrich (1994).

6. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 29. See Allison (1990), 201–213.

generates a series of why-questions. The first question asks for a reason-for-action or first-order reason; the second asks for a second-order reason, a reason-for-recognizing-a-first-order-reason, and so on. At this point, familiar considerations show that my answers will either regress indefinitely, end arbitrarily, turn in a circle, or culminate in the giving of an absolute ground.

In theoretical reasoning about empirical objects—the only objects of which we can have theoretical cognition, according to Kant—no absolute ground is available. Causal explanations regress indefinitely, while every theoretical cognition is grounded in brute facts about space and time.

The situation is different, however, in the case of practical reasoning. To be sure, no *content-specific* practical reason could fit the bill. A content-specific practical reason would specify that all practical reasons should have a particular kind of *content* and should attribute value to some specified set of *ends*. Given Kant's view of practical spontaneity, however, any set of ends must be *freely adopted*. So it will always be legitimate to ask why I adopt that set of ends and thus to continue the regress of why-questions.

The ultimate reason, however, can specify the *form* that all reasons should have. This putatively formal reason must provide a reason valid for any spontaneous choice—not only for all spontaneous lower-order choices, but also for why it should itself be spontaneously chosen. This seems to be a tall order, but Kant thinks this characterization of the task actually provides us with just the ultimate reason we want: "Choose only those practical reasons which any practically spontaneous self could choose."

This purely formal reason is self-justifying because any practically free self could choose it as a reason. Consequently, it ends the infinite regress nonarbitrarily. Kant also thinks that the ultimate reason is just a formulation of the moral law: "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law." In other words, Kant thinks that *the reason that any practically free self could choose* is equivalent to *the reason capable of giving universal law*. If so, then it not only justifies its own adoption, but it also constrains all lower-order adoptions of reasons and courses of action.

If this argument succeeds, then it shows that any practically free self *should* adopt the moral law as its ultimate reason, on pain of irrationality. It follows that practical freedom is a sufficient condition for being bound by the moral law. Although Kant does not make the point explicitly here, it is clear that, in contrast, theoretical spontaneity is not a sufficient con-

dition for being bound by the moral law. In other words, we cannot exclude the possibility of a being who is capable of theoretical cognition but who lacks a rational will.

Kant also argues that being bound by the moral law is a sufficient condition for practical freedom. Here the argument is simpler. The moral law prescribes the adoption of only those reasons that "could always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law." In other words, if you are bound by the moral law then your highest reason for choosing reasons should be their *fitness for universal law*. But fitness for universal law is a *formal* feature of reasons, which Kant thinks is obviously irreducible to any *empirical* features of the world that might causally explain your choice. So if you are bound by the moral law, then you should choose for a reason irreducible to any empirical cause. But to choose for a reason irreducible to any cause *just* is to enact an uncaused, spontaneous choice—that is, to be practically free. So if you are bound by the moral law, then you are practically free. This completes Kant's argument for the reciprocity thesis.

It is here that controversy arises. There is a circle: if I am practically free, then I am bound by the moral law, and if I am bound by the moral law, then I am practically free. But what response is available to the skeptical doubt that I am not practically free? After all, the Third Antinomy has shown that there can be no practical freedom in the empirical world. It has also shown that the idea of practical freedom in an intelligible world contains no contradiction. But this hardly amounts to a proof that practical freedom is a real possibility, let alone an actuality. And, for reasons given above, practical freedom does not follow from the spontaneity of theoretical cognition. How, then, can we find a firm foothold within the circle? How may we convert the hypothetical into a categorical affirmation of freedom and the moral law?

Kant appears to be forced *either* to abandon the attempt to justify freedom and morality altogether, *or* to justify them both in a way that is circular without being vicious. Many Kant scholars think Kant takes the first alternative, thus conceding victory either to moral skepticism or to moral dogmatism.⁷ For Kant now says that the actuality of freedom is

7. See, for example, Ameriks (1982), 209–210: "In effect no strict deduction, let alone a non-circular one, of the moral law (i.e. of the validity in general of morality, as opposed to the best formulation of its supreme principle) is offered, and no non-moral proof of freedom is given. . . . Instead of a solution to the earlier charge of a circularity in the deduction, the original project of a deduction is instead given up. Only freedom (now called 'the keystone of the whole architecture

shown by the fact of reason, and he seems to mean nothing more by this than that we are immediately aware that the moral law is binding for us. Once the binding character of the moral law is affirmed as a fact, then, by the Reciprocity Thesis, it follows that we are practically free. Moreover, it now follows that, with the hypothetical removed from Kant's synthetic commitment to the intelligibility of the ground of appearances, we are entitled to postulate the actuality of whatever other ideas are rationally necessary for agents bound by the moral law. So Kant goes on to argue that agents bound by the moral law should direct their activity towards the Highest Good and that we may rationally direct our activity towards the Highest Good only if we assume that there is a God and that we are immortal.

Interpretations of this kind are common in the 1780s and 1790s. In the terminology of the day, it is said that Kant appeals to a *fact of consciousness* (*Tatsache der Bewusstseins*)—specifically, to the fact of moral consciousness. Reinhold interprets Kant in this way, as does Fichte in the second (1793) edition of his first book, *Critique of All Revelation*.⁸ However, in one of a series of important book reviews, also published in 1793 and written while he is distancing himself from Reinhold and developing his own position, Fichte points out that appeal to the fact of moral consciousness is not an adequate response to skepticism about morality and freedom, and that it is incompatible with one of Reinhold's own best insights. After some background is provided, Fichte's arguments will turn out to be familiar.

of the system of pure reason') is argued for, and this is done on the basis of the ultimately unargued for premise of the validity of morality (and the unacceptability of compatibilism)." See also Bittner (1989), 89–90: "Considering that so far Kant had constructed his moral philosophy so as to culminate in a proof for the validity of moral demands, a goal still evident in the *Groundwork*, his transition to the doctrine of the fact might rather be described by saying, borrowing from Russell, that Kant, when he could no longer get on with honest toil, had recourse to theft." Of course, Ameriks does not go nearly far as Bittner, and it is consistent with the above quotation that Ameriks thinks Kant succeeds in adducing considerations that have some justificatory force, although they fall short of "strict deduction." For a more recent statement, see Ameriks (2003a), 249–262, especially 256–258, where Ameriks argues that, although there is no transcendental deduction of the moral law, there is a deduction of the idea of absolute freedom as an efficient cause and of the specific principles of morality from the moral law, which is in turn tantamount to a "credential" for the moral law insofar as practical philosophy "fills a space" left empty by theoretical philosophy.

8. See Fichte (1964–), VKO, I/1: 140: "it is a *fact of this consciousness* [*Tatsache des Bewusstseins*] that . . . an original form of the faculty of desire, and an original faculty of desire itself, actually proclaims itself to consciousness in our mind by means of this form. And beyond this ultimate principle of all philosophy, no further philosophy takes place. By this fact [*diese Tatsache*], then, it first becomes certain *that* man has a will."

Here is the background, which concerns Reinhold's earlier criticism of the definition of freedom given by Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, the first teacher of Kantian philosophy at Jena, in the second (1788) edition of his *Wörterbuch zum leichten Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften*. Reinhold complains that Schmid's attachment to the *letter* of Kant's text has led him to betray the *spirit* of Kant's philosophy. For Schmid has taken Kantian *expositions* of essential determinations of the free will, which are true *qua* expositions, and has treated them as *definitions*, which are not merely inaccurate but are actually incompatible with practical freedom and even with practical agency in general.

Schmid draws from the *Critique of Practical Reason* the not unreasonable conclusion that Kant thinks there are two *species* of will: the pure will and the empirical will, which he defines as follows:

- a. pure, absolute free will, autonomy, a faculty for acting according to principles of pure reason independent of sensibility; effectivity of the representation of pure laws; a will that is not determined through objects of sensibility, but rather subjects these and nature to itself, which is directed to the absolute good.
- b. empirical, sensible (pathological, aesthetic) affected will; a faculty for acting according to empirical principles of reason, dependent on practical sensibility (pragmatic laws); a will that is subjected to sensible nature, where the representations determining it are produced through sensible objects; that refers to the relative good, to happiness and what is bound up with it.

Our human will in concreto is called pure insofar as it contains pure principles, laws independent of sensibility, although it must also be called empirical insofar as sensibility affects us and impels us to actions. The divine will in the idea is pure in the absolute understanding or holy, i.e. it contains throughout no other than pure rational principles and impulses; its satisfaction is wholly independent from all objects, etc.⁹

But these definitions unavoidably entail, as Schmid himself confesses in his *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie*, that *only the pure will, only the will exercised in moral action, is free*. The empirical will cannot be free because it is *determined* by "representations . . . produced through sensible objects," whereas Schmid defines *practical freedom* as "dependence of the will on the

9. Schmid (1788), 356–357.

reason immediately determining it, on the pure moral law; autonomy of the will"—that is, as action produced by pure practical reason, action performed out of the motivation of the moral law. The dire consequences of Schmid's definitions go even further than his confession. For, as Reinhold argues, neither the empirical will nor the pure will, as defined by Schmid, is a will at all, since neither involves *self-determination*. Even the freedom of the Schmidian pure will, exercised in moral action, is problematic. For if, as Schmid admits:

the will is free only with respect to *ethical* actions and the ground of *unethical* actions is to be sought outside the will in external obstacles to and limits of freedom . . . then also the ground of *ethical* action would have to be sought in the *absence* of these obstacles, quite independently of this [practical] reason, and in no way in the *mere* self-activity of practical reason. The entire freedom of this reason, and thereby of the person, would therefore consist solely in a contingent independence from external compulsion, limited to certain cases, which in no way lies within the power of the person. Ethical action would follow unavoidably through a wholly non-volitional effect of practical reason, *as long as no obstacle existed*; and ethical as well as unethical action would have to be attributed to the presence or absence of the latter [obstacles].¹⁰

And if the freedom of the person were to depend, not on the person, but rather on the contingent absence of external obstacles, then it would be highly debatable whether this ought to be called freedom at all, or whether it should not rather be called a highly attenuated form of *dependence*.

Reinhold thinks that Schmid's view is typical of those whom he calls "Kantian determinists": "In order to save the will from the slavery of instinct and *theoretical reason*, they make it the slave of *practical reason*, or rather they entirely nullify the same, in order to let only practical reason act in its place in so-called *pure-willing*."¹¹ Fidelity to the spirit of Kant's philosophy of freedom requires us to acknowledge that freedom of the will consists not only in (1) independence from instinctual compulsion or the immediate demands of the self-interested drive, and (2) independence from the demands of the self-interested, drive mediated by theoretical reason, but (3) "also in the *independence of the person from constraint through practical reason itself*." Thus, in Reinhold's view, free will in the positive sense is "the

10. Reinhold (1790–1792), BKP, 2: 296–297.

11. Reinhold (1790–1792), BKP, 2: 295–296.

capacity for self-determination through volition for or against the practical law." In short, freedom of the will must essentially include the capacity for personal self-determination. This means that it must essentially include the capacity to determine oneself *against the moral law*: the power to choose evil.

Consequently, we must distinguish between two types of "self-activity" [*Selbsttätigkeit*], two "utterances" (*äusserungen*) or functions of the human spirit: (1) the nonvolitional self-activity of practical reason, which consists in nothing but the self-legislation of the moral law; and (2) the volitional self-activity of the person, which consists in the capacity to determine oneself for or against the moral law. Both types of self-activity are *free*, although in different senses: practical reason is autonomous while persons are self-determining. Only the second kind of self-activity is what we ordinarily call a will. Furthermore, Schmid is wrong to understand the distinction between the pure will and the empirical will as a distinction between two species of will. Rather, the pure and empirical wills are actually "*one and the same will*, only treated from different viewpoints." The pure will is the will regarded as *a priori* determinable by pure practical reason, whereas the empirical will is the will regarded as *a posteriori* determinable by empirical practical reason (or the rationally mediated demands of the self-interested drive). All human willing is therefore both pure and empirical. It is quite incorrect, then, to identify—as Schmid does—the pure will with the ethical will and the empirical will with the unethical. Rather, the ethical will is the human will insofar as it is actually determined *a priori* by pure practical reason, and the unethical will is the human will insofar as it is actually determined *a posteriori* by empirical practical reason, which becomes the immoral will if it is actually determined *contrary* to the moral law. No account of the will can afford to ignore self-determination, and no account of the freedom of the will can afford, Reinhold argues, to ignore the freedom to be unethical and even immoral.¹²

12. Thus Reinhold anticipates the distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*, which Kant does not make until 1793. See 297, n.62 below. Kant is thought to be criticizing Reinhold when he objects to a *Bastarderklärung* of freedom in his 1797 *Metaphysics of Morals*, 6: 226–227. There Kant rejects the definition of freedom of choice "as the capacity to make a choice for or against the law," on the grounds that freedom pertains to the human "merely as an intelligence," whereas the undeniable capacity to choose against the law pertains to the human only "as a *sensible being*" and "appearances cannot make any supersensible object (such as free choice) understandable. . . . Only

Now I turn to Fichte's review, in which he argues that Reinhold's interpretation of the appeal to the fact of reason amounts to a betrayal of the spirit of Kant's philosophy, which Reinhold had defended against Schmid. Reinhold writes: "From its effects, through which it comes forth among the facts of consciousness, freedom is fully comprehensible to me; and insofar it is no object of *faith*, but rather of proper *knowledge* for me."¹³ But, Fichte argues, this is incompatible with Reinhold's own distinction:

Namely, one must distinguish between the *determining*, as free act of the intelligible I; and the *being-determined*, as apparent state of the empirical I.—The latter utterance of absolute self-activity of the human spirit appears in a fact [*Tatsache*]; in the being-determined of the *higher capacity for desire*, which to be sure must not be confused with the will but must just as little be passed over in a theory of the will; self-activity gives this capacity its *determinate, in only one way determinable form*, which appears as the moral law. The utterance of absolute self-activity in the *determining* of the *will*, which is to be distinguished from the former, does not appear and cannot appear, because the will is originally *formless*; it is merely assumed as postulate of the moral law given to consciousness through that form of the original capacity for desire, and is therefore the object of faith not of knowledge. The *inclination* (*propensio* as such) as being-determined of the (higher or lower) *capacity for desire* appears; but not the raising of the same to actual *willing*. The will in the appearance is never *determining*, but rather always *determined*, the determination has already occurred; if it had not occurred, then it would appear not as *will* but rather as *inclination*. The apparent sensation of self-determining is no

freedom in relation to the internal lawgiving of reason is really a capacity; the possibility of deviating from it is an incapacity. How can that capacity be defined by this incapacity? It would be a definition that added to the practical concept the *exercise* of it, as this is taught by experience, a *hybrid definition* (*definitio hybrida*) that puts the concept in a false light." If indeed Kant has Reinhold in mind, then he is unfair. For Reinhold never claims to be giving a definition when he characterized freedom of the will as "the faculty of a person for determining himself to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of a desire, either according to practical laws or against the same" (Reinhold [1790–1792], BKP, 2: 271). Indeed, he abandons the very enterprise of defining freedom of the will, declaring that "All detailed utterances about the will become incorrect the very moment one takes them as logical expressions. For none can be substituted for the explanandum." (BKP, 2: 269) It seems to me that the same insight underlies the comments of both Reinhold and Kant: since freedom of the will consists in self-determination, it can have no real definition, for a real definition must specify not only the distinguishing marks of a concept but also its determining grounds, but freedom of the will can have no determining ground except itself.

13. Reinhold (1790–1792), BKP, 2: 284.

sensation, but rather an unnoticed consequence of the *non*-discovery of the determining force. Insofar as the will is "self-determining," it is not at all a sense- but rather a supersensible capacity. But the *being-determined* of the will appears and now arises the question: is that self-determining to a certain satisfaction or dissatisfaction assumed as a postulate of reason for the possibility of attribution, the *cause* of the *appearance* of the being-determined to that satisfaction or dissatisfaction? If one answers this question affirmatively, as Reinhold actually answers it: ["From its *effects*, through which it comes forth among the *facts of consciousness*, the freedom (of the will) is fully graspable by me, etc."] then one drags an intelligible into the series of *natural causes* and thereby misleadingly brings it about that it is misplaced into the series of *natural effects*, assuming an intelligible that is no intelligible.¹⁴

Fichte argues that only autonomy, not self-determination, can appear in a fact of consciousness. For a fact of consciousness is a determination of a person's consciousness with a determinate form. Autonomy has a determinate form—the form of the moral law—and this form can be manifested by a determination of consciousness, namely when a person is conscious of being bound by the moral law. However, this fact of consciousness—the consciousness of subjection to a self-given moral law—might still be *illusory*. For it might still be the case that the person in question does not actually have the capacity to *determine* him or herself for or against the law and therefore does not have the freedom to act out of the motivation of the law. But this second aspect of freedom—the capacity to determine oneself for or against one's own autonomy—does not and cannot have a determinate form, for it consists precisely in the activity of *determining the form* of the highest maxim of the will and is therefore *prior* to any such determinate form. Hence, "the utterance of the absolute self-activity in the *determining* of the will . . . does not appear and cannot appear, because the will is originally *formless*."

What must be shown against the skeptic about freedom and morality, then, is that the fact of consciousness of autonomy is *grounded* in the absolute self-activity of the determining of the will. Now, Reinhold does indeed claim that the fact of moral consciousness is an "*effect*" of the capacity for personal self-determination. But in making this claim, Reinhold "drags

14. Fichte (1964–), RC, I/2: 9–10.

an intelligible into the series of *natural causes* and thereby misleadingly brings it about that it is misplaced into the series of *natural effects*; assuming an intelligible that is no intelligible." That is to say, Reinhold appeals to the Principle of Sufficient Reason—understood as the causal principle that every event is the effect of a necessitating cause—in order to argue from the *actuality* of moral consciousness to the actuality, and therefore obviously to the *possibility*, of self-determination as the necessitating cause or sufficient ground of that consciousness. The problem is that, according to Kant's Second Analogy, every appearance or phenomenal event is the effect of a necessitating *natural* and *sensible* cause. So if the fact of moral consciousness is a phenomenal event, then it is the effect of a necessitating sensible cause. As Fichte puts it, "An actual real ground in a preceding appearance must be assumed for the *being-determined* [of the higher capacity for desire] as appearance, in accordance with the law of natural causality."¹⁵ But Reinhold wants to argue that the fact of moral consciousness is a phenomenal event that is the effect of a necessitating *intelligible* and *supersensible* cause.

There seem to be only two alternatives. Either (1) self-determination is the natural and sensible, necessitating cause of the fact of moral consciousness; but then this self-determination is "an intelligible that is no intelligible" and is not the *absolute*—i.e., sensibly unconditioned—freedom whose reality was supposed to be proven. Or (2) the fact of moral consciousness has a sensible, necessitating cause that is distinct from absolute self-determination; but then the fact of moral consciousness has a ground by which it is fully explained, and the Principle of Sufficient Reason cannot license the appeal to *another*, supersensible ground, which is entirely redundant.

What, then, is to be done to save freedom and morality from skeptical doubt? Fichte's full answer to this question is not yet worked out, but he makes an important suggestion:

The source of this misunderstanding can be stopped only through a return to what seems to the reviewer to be the true spirit of the critical philosophy. Namely—to the *determining* of absolute self-activity through itself (to *willing*), the principle of sufficient reason cannot be applied at all; for it is One and a simple, and completely isolated act [*Handlung*]; the de-

15. Fichte (1964–), RC, I/2: 11.

termining itself is at the same time the becoming-determined, and the determining is the determined.¹⁶

This should be reminiscent of a central theme of the previous four chapters. Reinhold's version of the appeal to the fact of reason is, in effect, a regressive argument intended to refute Agrippan skepticism. But, as Fichte in effect argues, there can be no regress to an absolute first principle, for the Heterogeneity Requirement cannot be met by any condition reached regressively.

In a second review, Fichte makes clear what the implications are for the confrontation between Kantians and skeptics:

The main question is: whether that feeling of the absolutely right (not a benevolence proposing happiness), whose existence in consciousness the opponent can concede in his entire expansion, can be derived from something higher and indeed from a practical reason or not? One cannot appeal to a fact against someone who denies this; for he concedes what is actually a fact, and it is not a fact that reason is practical and effects that feeling through this capacity it possesses: neither can one appeal to the feeling of a moral necessity (that *ought*) that is united with it, for this rises to inclination from the determination of the higher capacity for desire, as *higher*, in the Kantian system as well . . . nor finally can one appeal [to the fact] that in that system the ground for assuming freedom of the will falls away; for if such a free will is no fact of consciousness but rather a mere postulate of the moral law assumed as effect of practical reason, then a system which does not need it, makes do without it . . . To be sure, proper morality would be nullified and we would be fettered again in the chains of natural necessity, but the facts of consciousness would still be explained satisfactorily and with the greatest consistency, all the inconceivabilities of the Kantian system would be avoided, and morality would be a demonstrable illusion.¹⁷

Fichte is hardly content with this situation. Instead, he says that practical reason "cannot be passed off as a fact, nor postulated as the consequence of a fact, rather it must be proven. It must be proven *that* reason is practical." He then proceeds to give a sketch of such a proof, which is sometimes taken as anticipating the deductive strategies he goes on to develop:

16. Fichte (1964–), RC, I/2: 10.

17. Fichte (1964–), I/2: 27.

Such a proof, which could at the same time very easily be the foundation of *all* philosophical knowledge (with respect to its material), would have to go roughly like this: man is given to consciousness as unity (as I); this fact can only be explained under the presupposition of an absolute unconditioned in him; therefore an absolute unconditioned in men must be assumed. But such an absolute unconditioned is practical reason:—and then for the first time that moral feeling, above all given in a fact, ought to be assumed with certainty as an effect of this demonstrated practical reason.¹⁸

Regarding this passage, Neuhouser comments that:

the proof Fichte proposes here is intended as a transcendental argument similar to Kant's mode of argumentation in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It begins with a fact of consciousness that presumably will be universally admitted and argues toward its conclusion by elaborating the conditions that make that fact possible.¹⁹

Indeed, on Neuhouser's view, Fichte maintains this strategy throughout the Jena period. All that changes is the fact of consciousness taken as a starting point, not the strategy—which Neuhouser takes to be one of regressive transcendental argumentation—and not the goal, which is the demonstration of the practicality of pure reason. In the 1794–1795 version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte starts from a fact of theoretical consciousness, which means that he is in effect returning to the very strategy that Kant had tried and then abandoned as doomed to failure. In the 1796–1799 version, Fichte starts from a practical fact of consciousness, which raises the question whether he has himself given up all hope of response to Agrippan skepticism.

In my view, however, this cannot be correct. In 1793, Fichte has already recognized that no regressive argument from *any* fact of consciousness can demonstrate the actuality of an absolute first principle. Indeed, his greatest hostility seems to be directed against those who adopt the method of regressive argumentation from facts of consciousness—notably Schmid himself.²⁰

18. Fichte (1964–), I/2: 28.

19. Neuhouser (1990), 36.

20. See Fichte's 1796 "annihilation" of Schmid, in Fichte (1964–), VS, I/3: 264: "Both Reinhold and Schmid begin their systems with facts. The former, with a sense of what is truly philosophical, starts with facts in order to ascend to the foundation of these facts; the latter does so in order to

What, then, could Fichte mean? Does he think that, in the second *Critique*, Kant himself is guilty of the same confusion as Reinhold? Or does he think that Kant employs a *progressive* strategy that Fichte now hopes to develop?

5.3

Fichte never offers an interpretation of Kant's Deduction of Freedom. But some of his remarks suggest an interpretation that illuminates the deductive strategies developed, not only by him, but also by Schelling and Hegel. The suggested interpretation turns out to be very plausible in its own right.

Here are two suggestive passages from Fichte. The first is from a letter to Niethammer written in December 1793, thus after the two reviews discussed above:

Kant based the moral law upon a fact (which is correct, if one understands it properly), and his followers believe that they are thereby everywhere justified, whenever demonstration and explanation prove to be a bit troublesome, in having recourse to a fact *foi d'auteur*. They do this without considering that their opponents are entitled to the same right, and that thereby any absurdity can be proven from an alleged fact—for which no further proof can be supplied, but for which everyone appeals to his own consciousness, with no way of showing why he deserves to be believed any more than his opponent. There is only one original fact of the human mind, a fact which is the foundation of philosophy in general, as well as of its two branches, theoretical and practical philosophy. Kant was certainly acquainted with this fact, but nowhere did he state it. Whoever discovers this fact will present philosophy as a science.²¹

descend to the consequences of these facts—in order to arrange them and to argue about them in various ways. Reinhold's procedure would be the reverse of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, if only such a reversal were possible, and if only one were able, by ascending from what is founded to its foundation, to arrive at an ultimate foundation. But this series is endless." The regressive method is also adopted by students of Reinhold who are dissatisfied with his systematization project, as discussed in Chapter 4. Reinhold himself goes some way towards this approach in the revised version of his elementary philosophy, prior to his conversion to Fichte's new version of the systematization project. See Schopenhauer (1965), 62, 79–80, 83–85, for the observation that the appeal to facts of consciousness, encouraged by a misinterpretation of Kant's second *Critique*, as well as by some features of Kant's theoretical philosophy, brought some self-styled Kantians into alliance with Jacobi. What underlies Schopenhauer's observation is the point that, like Jacobi, those who engage in regressive argumentation from facts of consciousness are no longer responsive to Agrippan skepticism about justification.

21. Fichte (1964–), III/1, No.169.

The second passage is from Fichte's third and most important review, the review of *Aenesidemus* published in 1794:

This reviewer anyway is convinced that the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the Principle of Consciousness can be strictly derived, *a priori* and independently of all experience. The initial incorrect presupposition, and the one which caused the Principle of Consciousness to be proposed as the first principle of all philosophy, was certainly the presupposition that one must begin with a fact. We certainly do require a first principle which is material and not merely formal. But such a principle does not have to express a *fact* [*eine Thatsache*]; it can also express an *act* [*eine Thathandlung*]²²—if I may risk asserting something which can be neither explained nor proven here.²²

The first passage suggests that Kant's appeal to the fact of reason is not, when properly understood, the invocation of a fact of consciousness from which to launch a regressive transcendental argument. The second passage suggests that, when properly understood, what Kant calls the *Factum der Vernunft* is not a *Tatsache* but rather a *Tathandlung*, not a fact but rather an act. So understood, Kant's Deduction of Freedom is a model for the systematic deduction that Fichte himself intends to undertake, thereby rendering philosophy systematic and scientific.

This suggestion must be assessed in two ways: linguistically and philosophically. First, is it plausible that, when Kant speaks of a *Factum der Vernunft*, he is talking about an act of reason? Second, does the suggestion enable a plausible reconstruction of Kant's deductive strategy?²³

22. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 46.

23. Proops (2003) provides a helpful discussion of Kant's uses of the legal terminology of "facts" in both KrV and KpV. He argues, against many commentators on KrV, that the question *quid facti* is the question whether the categories have an *a priori* origin, a question pertinent to the question *quid juris* that is addressed in the metaphysical deduction. He also argues that the *Factum* of reason in KpV should similarly be understood as concerning the *a priori* origin of the moral law and that this *Factum* has deductive significance. I agree with much of what Proops says. As will become clear by the end of this chapter, in my own view the roles of the Metaphysical Deduction and the *Factum* of reason are closely connected within the German idealist project. However, Proops (2003), 227–228 criticizes an interpretation that he imputes to me. The criticism is to some extent misdirected, since Franks (1997), to which Proops refers, is far from containing an interpretation of Kant's Deduction of Freedom. Still, there is apparently some disagreement between Proops and myself about whether Kant's *Factum* of reason is an act, although Proops agrees that Kant sometimes uses the term *Factum* to refer to acts. See, for example, Proops (2003), 215: "Notice that in the process of transplanting the metaphor, the idea of the *Factum* as an *act* recedes from view: what emerges as being of central importance is the status of the *Factum* as a fact that is relevant

Consideration of the first question has unfortunately been clouded by a factual error. Anglophone Fichte interpreters have thought that the term *Tatsache* has an established usage in the 1780s and 1790s, and that Fichte himself introduces the new term, *Tathandlung*.²⁴ If this were true, then it would be *prima facie* implausible that what Kant means in 1788 is best expressed by a term invented by Fichte in 1793–1794, especially since Kant himself uses the term *Tatsache* to explain the *Factum der Vernunft* in 1790. But the reverse is true: *Tathandlung* is an old German word, whereas *Tatsache* is a term coined in 1755, whose usage is widespread but far from clear by the end of the century. It is entirely plausible that, when Kant uses the Latin word *Factum* in 1785, he is talking about an act, not about a state of affairs, which is what has come to be signified by the term *Tatsache* and *res facti* or “matter of fact,” of which it is a translation. For *Factum* is of course derived from the verb *facere*, meaning “to do or make.”²⁵ In the eighteenth century, the term was still connected to its original, active meaning, although it was beginning to acquire other meanings. The connection is still perceptible in legal English, where an accomplice before or after the fact is someone who is complicit with the criminal, either before or after the criminal act. In short, it is entirely plausible that what Kant means when he speaks of the *Factum der Vernunft* is an act of reason. Even when Kant characterizes the *Factum* as a *Tatsache* or *res facti* in the third *Critique*, this does not count against Fichte’s proposal. For Kant may have understood these terms in an active sense as well, especially if he saw no need to distinguish between the active sense and some other sense still in development.

These linguistic points are worthless unless there is some philosophical profit to be gained by interpreting the Deduction of Freedom as deduction from an act of reason. So I now turn to the deduction itself.

At the outset, I note that the deduction is supplied by nothing less than the entire Analytic of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In this respect, among others, I differ from Lewis White Beck and Henry Allison, who look for the deduction in the section of the Analytic entitled “On the deduction of

to, but falls short of, a final ruling.” In my view, Kant is not scrupulous about the distinction between the act of reason’s self-legislation and the synthetic *a priori* judgment in which this act is propositionally expressed.

24. See Franks (1997).

25. Although this point seems obvious, it is rarely applied to the *Factum* of reason. I developed the point in Franks (1993) and subsequently became aware that it had been made and put to different uses by Willaschek (1992).

the principles of pure practical reason.” As they both emphasize, Kant does not give a deduction of the moral law, which this title mentions.²⁶ Indeed, the point of the section in question is to explain why such a deduction is neither possible nor necessary, and in the first sentence Kant says:

This Analytic shows that pure reason can be practical—that is, can of itself, independently of anything empirical, determine the will—and it does so by a *Factum* in which pure reason in us proves itself actually [in *der Tat*] practical, namely autonomy in the principle of morality by which reason determines the will to deeds [zur *Tat*].²⁷

This sentence shows that the whole Analytic provides the deduction, whereas Kant’s double use of the active language of acts in his clarification of the *Factum* is certainly striking, if not decisive.²⁸

The problem Kant faces, it will be recalled, is that he has established a circle in which practical freedom and the moral law entail one another, so that it seems unclear how we may break into the circle, how we may establish either freedom or morality without tacitly presupposing what is to be shown. Kant characterizes his new strategy in a well-known footnote to his Preface:

Lest anyone suppose that he find an *inconsistency* when I now call freedom the condition of the moral law and afterwards, in the treatise, maintain that the moral law is the condition under which we can first *become aware* of freedom, I want only to remark that whereas freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For, had not the moral law *already* been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves justified in *assuming* such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves.²⁹

I take this to mean that although there is indeed a circle here, there is nevertheless an epistemic asymmetry that enables us to make use of the circle in a way that is not vicious but virtuous.

Kant explains the epistemic priority of the moral law as follows:

26. See Beck, “The Fact of Reason: An Essay on Justification in Ethics” in Beck (1965), 200–214 and Beck (1960); Allison (1988) and (1990), 230–249.

27. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 42.

28. On the title of this section and the active character of the *Factum*, see Ameriks (2003), 256–257.

29. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 4n.

Thus freedom and unconditional practical law reciprocally imply each other. Now I do not ask here whether they are in fact different or whether it is not much rather the case that an unconditional law is merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, this being identical with the positive concept of freedom; I ask instead from what our *cognition* of the unconditionally practical *starts*, whether from freedom or from the practical law. It cannot start from freedom, for we can neither be immediately conscious of this, since the first concept of it is negative, nor can we conclude to it from experience, since experience lets us cognize only the law of appearances and hence the mechanism of nature, the direct opposite of freedom. It is therefore the *moral law*, of which we become immediately conscious (as soon as we draw up maxims of the will for ourselves), that *first* offers itself to us and, inasmuch as reason presents it as a determining ground not to be outweighed by any sensible conditions and indeed quite independent of them, leads directly to the concept of freedom. But how is consciousness of that moral law possible? We can become aware of pure practical laws just as we are aware of pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the setting aside of all empirical conditions to which reason directs us.³⁰

Here Kant says that, although we are not immediately conscious of freedom, we are immediately conscious of the moral law. The immediacy of moral consciousness seems to have three aspects. First, acknowledgment of the moral law follows immediately—that is, without need for any further acknowledgment—from the capacity for practical reasoning, the ability to “draw up maxims of the will” which are, for Kant, the proper subject matter of practical reasoning. Second, the moral law is immediately necessary in the way it directs the will. That is, the moral law immediately constitutes a reason for acting and a motivation for acting, without the need for any further desire or interest to accompany it. Third, the moral law is unmediated by empirical motivation in the further sense that it provides a motivating reason that outweighs any and—as we shall see—every possible competing reason.

In the last two senses; although not in the first, consciousness of the moral law is like consciousness of “pure theoretical principles”—namely, the *pure* categorical principles, *not* their *schematized* counterparts—which constitute unconditioned justifications that escape the Agrippan trilemma,

30. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 30.

and which can be realized only if the Heterogeneity Requirement is satisfied, if "all empirical conditions" are entirely set aside. The immediacy of which Kant speaks here is characterizable, then, not in terms of the epistemic certainty of that which is immediately given in perception, but rather in terms of the unconditionality of any ground that escapes the Agrippan trilemma.

Now Kant introduces what he calls an "experience" that "confirms this order of concepts in us." On my reading, this example, although briefly described, plays a crucial role throughout the rest of the *Analytic*.³¹

Suppose someone asserts of his lustful inclination that, when the desired object and the opportunity are present, it is quite irresistible to him; ask him whether, if a gallows were erected in front of the house where he finds this opportunity and he would be hanged on it immediately after gratifying his lust, he would not then control his inclination. One need not conjecture very long what he would reply. But ask him whether, if his prince demanded, on pain of the same immediate execution, that he give false testimony against an honorable man whom the prince would like to destroy under a plausible pretext, he would consider it possible to overcome his love of life, however great it may be. He would perhaps not venture to assert whether he would do it or not, but he must admit without hesitation that it would be possible for him. He judges, therefore, that he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it and cognizes freedom within him, which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him.³²

The first question is intended to elicit from me the acknowledgment that my "love of life" outweighs any particular desire I may have. The underlying idea is of course that I cannot satisfy any desire once I am dead. Kant's second question is intended to elicit from me the acknowledgment that the moral law outweighs my "love of life" itself, since there are circumstances in which I recognize that, were I to act to save my life, I would be doing something morally wrong.³³

31. I take this to be the point of Kant's remark at Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 92, when he is retrospectively surveying the *Analytic* as a whole, that the philosopher "has the advantage . . . that almost like the chemist, he can at any time arrange an experiment with the practical reason of any man, in order to distinguish the moral (pure) motive from the empirical; he does so when he adds the moral law (as a motive) to the empirically affected will (e.g. to the will of a person who would like to tell a lie so that he could thereby gain something)."

32. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 30.

33. Kant evidently does not think that there are desires for which I may choose to give up my life. Since it is all too easy to find apparent counterexamples—people who choose to die for causes

As it stands, this can hardly be enough to give Kant what he wants. First, there is the problem that not everyone will give Kant's questions the answers he expects. Some will say that they have desires for the sake of whose satisfaction it would be rational for them to die if necessary, and that, even if it would be rational for them to die rather than to defame an honorable man, this shows only that they have an overwhelming desire that accords with what Kant calls the moral law—say, the desire to be viewed as a moral hero. Second, even if everyone were to give Kant's questions the expected answers, this would still seem to prove only that, insofar as I *believe* I ought, I cannot help but *believe* I can. It does not show that I am actually free to act because of moral duty.

Still, we are not yet at the end of the Analytic. So we should not conclude that what Kant calls the immediacy of consciousness of the moral law is supposed to do all the justificatory work. We should not assume that Kant, like Jacobi, sees an appeal to immediacy as an *alternative* to a response to Agrippan skepticism.

In the rest of Chapter 1 of the Analytic, we learn *inter alia* more about the active character of the *Factum*:

Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a *Factum* of reason because one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason, for example, from consciousness of freedom (since this is not antecedently given to us) and because it instead forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic *a priori* proposition that is not based on any intuition, either pure or empirical, although it would be analytic if the freedom of the will were presupposed; but for this, as a positive concept, an intellectual intuition would be required, which certainly cannot be assumed here. However, in order to avoid misinterpretation in regarding this law as given, it must be noted carefully that it is not an empirical *Factum* but the sole *Factum* of pure reason which, by it, announces itself as originally law-giving (*sic volo, sic iubeo*).³⁴

Here Kant's point is that the moral law is not only immediately necessary in the three senses explained above, but is also entirely *formal*. It expresses nothing but the form of the will of an agent who is endlessly responsive

that are not intrinsically moral, such as their country, or even for evil causes—Kant must think that all such cases are either cases in which one is acting irrationally or cases in which one implicitly takes oneself, rightly or wrongly, to be dying for the moral law.

34. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 31.

to requests for reasons. So consciousness of the moral law does not involve any intuition—that is, any quasi-perceptual recognition of either the value of some end or the property of freedom in me. For any such recognition could give rise only to a content-based reason for acting, such as “Act so as to fulfill the ends you perceive as valuable” or “Act so as to fulfill the ends that express your freedom.” Instead, the immediate necessity of the entirely formal moral law must express neither the unconditional value of some end nor the unconditional value of some property I possess; but rather the unconditional value of a will that is capable of unconditional valuation. In this very special case, willing suffices for reason-giving.³⁵ Thus, to will for the sake of the moral law is to will one’s own will, or to act for the sake of one’s own act. But this is true only because the will and act in question are not *individual*, but rather express *the will of a rational agent as such*.

We also learn more in Chapter 1 of the *Analytic* about the freedom deduced through the *Factum* of reason. For Kant emphasizes that, although we can have no intuition that would enable us to acquire theoretical cognition of the in itself, nevertheless “the moral law . . . provides a *Factum* absolutely inexplicable from any data of the sensible world and from the whole compass of our theoretical use of reason, a *Factum* that points to a pure world of the understanding and, indeed, even *determines* it *positively* and lets us cognize something of it, namely a law.”³⁶ In other words, the synthetic commitment to the in itself, which theoretical reason needed to resolve the Third Antinomy, but which it could still regard only as hypothetical, is now rendered categorical. For “this *Factum* is inseparably connected with, and indeed identical with, consciousness of freedom of the will, whereby the will of a rational being that, as belonging to the sensible world cognizes [*erkennt*] itself as, like other efficient causes, necessarily subject to laws of causality, yet in the practical is also conscious of itself on another side, namely as a being in itself, conscious of its existence as determinable in an intelligible order of things.”³⁷

For Kant, a cognition or *Erkenntnis* requires both linkage of concepts according to some universal and necessary principle, and application of

35. In Juvenal’s sixth satire, to which Kant alludes at the end of this passage, a mistress is tyrannically declaring that she needs no further justification for putting a slave to death than the fact that she wants to, since this wish expresses her displeasure, which is reason enough.

36. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 43.

37. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 42.

those concepts to actuality via something immediate and singular, for concepts are representations that relate to actuality only via general characteristic. In theoretical cognition, the immediate and singular application to actuality is supplied by sensible intuition, which can be pure or empirical. We now find that there can also be practical cognition, in which the immediate and singular application is supplied by the self-expressive or autonomous act of the rational will as such. Thus I can cognize practically that I can will the moral law and am thus subject to it.³⁸ This practical cognition is expressible in a synthetic *a priori* judgment.

The practical character of the cognition is distinctive and sufficient to prevent me from employing it for theoretical purposes. For example, although I am aware that I am actually free, and although this awareness has cognitive significance, I can have no insight whatsoever into how my freedom is possible. There are no conditions for the unconditioned. So I cannot simply conjoin my practical awareness of my freedom with my theoretical cognitions of the empirical world. I can have no idea whatsoever of how to do this, since I cannot know how one and the same me can be both empirically determined and intelligibly free, although I can be sure that it is indeed true that I am both. It is in this sense that I cognize my subjection to the moral law *practically*, or *only from the practical point of view*. This does not mean that my cognition is epistemically weaker than my theoretical cognitions. Nor does it mean that it is cognition of something metaphysically weaker than an actuality. Rather, *my practical cognition and its object are of an order entirely different from my theoretical cognition and its object*.

Chapter 1 of the Analytic still seems to leave open the possibility, as I have said before, of a skeptical response. For one may still want to say that Kant has shown at most that I *cannot help but believe* that I ought to act for the sake of the moral law and that I therefore *cannot help but believe* that I can act as an absolutely free agent. But a Deduction of Freedom needs to show that I *actually* ought to act for the sake of the moral law and that I *actually* can do so.

In Chapters 2 and 3 of the Analytic, Kant can be seen to respond to two

38. A theoretical cognition is to the effect that the world is thus and so, while a practical cognition is to the effect that I should act thus and so. Consequently, although my awareness of my autonomous will-determination—hence of my free activity—makes possible my practical cognition that I should act as the moral law demands, it would be inaccurate to say that I cognize my freedom practically. Here my formulation owes much to conversations with Karl Ameriks.

versions or aspects of this skeptical response. In Chapter 2 he can be seen as responding to the worry—reminiscent of Maimon's worry about causality in the realm of theoretical cognition—that the moral law is not only free of content, but also free of determinate implications. In Chapter 3 he can be seen as responding to the worry that, even if the moral law has determinate implications, I cannot actually implement them. If his response to either of these worries is inadequate, then the claim to have deduced freedom will seem hollow.

It is Kant's response to the second worry that concerns me here because of its implications for German idealist argumentation. To understand this response, we need first to consider in more detail the sort of empirical story Kant thinks we should tell about *motivation*, about the determination of the will to action.

According to Kant, what we might call a standard motivational story involves three elements: an *inclination*, a *maxim*, and a *feeling*. An inclination is a tendency to pursue some end. Animals, in Kant's view, are simply *driven* to action by their inclinations; but we humans are motivated only by those inclinations that we have chosen to *incorporate* into some maxim or policy. If I am inclined, for example, towards freedom from financial difficulty, then I may incorporate that inclination into the maxim, "When in financial difficulty, acquire cash by falsely promising to pay it back later."³⁹ Suppose that I have adopted this maxim and that I now find myself in financial difficulty. According to Kant, my inclination will now affect my *feelings*, thus moving or determining my will. My representation of the end to which I am inclined—freedom from financial difficulty—produces a pleasurable feeling, and that feeling moves my will to action.

The standard motivational story allows us to reformulate the skeptical worry that the moral law cannot actually motivate us. Motivation consists in a feeling of pleasure attending the representation of an end to which I am inclined. This feeling is empirical and can be explained in terms of antecedent empirical causes. Whether I am susceptible to a specific motivational feeling depends partly on my choice of maxims and partly on my inclinations. Which inclinations happen to affect me is a contingent fact about my empirical self. Now it seems to follow that contingent facts about my empirical self are necessary conditions for my being motivated. But this

39. See Allison's discussion of what he calls the Incorporation Thesis in Allison (1990), 40 and *passim*.

creates a problem for morality. Motivation seems always to require, as a necessary condition, the sort of empirical self that is inclined to feel pleasure when certain ends are represented. But Kant characterizes practical spontaneity as the capacity for the moral law to *necessitate* motivation, to be the *sufficient* condition for the determination of the will to action, *regardless* of contingent, empirical conditions. So it appears that if (a) motivation always involves feeling, and if (b) feeling always depends partly on contingent, empirical conditions, then we are *not* practically spontaneous.

Kant retains thesis (a)—that motivation always involves feeling—but jettisons thesis (b)—that feeling always depends partly on contingent, empirical conditions. In order to show that we are practically spontaneous, then, Kant needs to show that we are capable of some feeling that is necessitated by the moral law independently of the inclinations to which we happen to be subject. Kant calls this special moral feeling: *the feeling of respect*.

Kant seeks to show us, I think, that the feeling of respect is implicit in the moral consciousness to which we have been brought *by consideration of the original example*, the example that asks us to choose between obeying the moral law and life itself.

Kant characterizes respect as follows: "The consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law, yet as combined with an unavoidable constraint put on all inclinations though only by one's own reason, is respect for the law."⁴⁰ When we consider an example in which the moral law opposes our love of life, we do indeed become conscious "of a *free* submission of the will to the law, yet as combined with an unavoidable constraint put on all inclinations though only by one's own reason." Kant has already argued that, in considering the example, we are conscious of the moral law as freely self-imposed through the *Factum* of reason. Now we must see that we are conscious of the moral law as outweighing all our inclinations. This is because our continued survival is a condition for the fulfillment of any end to which we are inclined. So if the moral law outweighs our love of life, then it must outweigh all our inclinations. Therefore the consciousness to which we are brought by the example implicitly constitutes "respect for the law."

To say that our consciousness implicitly constitutes the feeling of respect is to say that in considering the exemplary choice between duty and death,

40. Kant (1900-), KpV, 5: 80.

we actually *produce* the feeling of respect. So Kant is claiming that in reading the *Analytic*, we *demonstrate* the reality of freedom by *producing* an effect necessitated by the moral law.

But how does this production work? To understand it, we must examine Kant's distinction between two aspects of our natural desire for happiness and two corresponding aspects of moral constraint:

All the inclinations taken together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one's own happiness) constitute regard for oneself (*solipsismus*). This is either the self-regard of *love for oneself*, a predominant *benevolence* towards oneself (*Philautia*), or that of satisfaction with oneself (*Arrogantia*). The former is called, in particular, self-love, the latter self-conceit.⁴¹

Following Andrews Reath,⁴² we can identify *self-love* with what Rawls calls "general egoism": the claim that *my* inclinations are sufficient reasons for *my* action, just as *your* inclinations are sufficient reasons for *your* action. *Self-conceit*, meanwhile, is what Rawls calls "first-person dictatorship": the claim that *my* inclinations are sufficient reasons for *everybody's* action.⁴³ The moral law constrains these two species of egoism in two different ways:

Pure practical reason merely *infringes upon* self-love [*thut . . . bloss Abbruch*], inasmuch as it only restricts it, as natural and active in us even prior to the moral law, to the condition of agreement with this law, and then it is called *rational self-love*. But it *strikes down* [*schlägt sie gar nieder*] self-conceit, since all claims of esteem for oneself that precede accord with the moral law are null and quite unwarranted because certainty of a disposition in accord with this law is the first condition of any worth of a person (we shall soon make this more distinct), and any presumption prior to this is false and opposed to the law.⁴⁴

Self-love or "general egoism" is merely *infringed upon* by pure practical reason because there is nothing wrong with regarding my inclinations as reasons for action, provided I regard them not as *sufficient* reasons but only as reasons on which I act when so acting is morally permissible. But *self-*

41. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 73.

42. Reath (1989), 294–295.

43. Rawls (1971), 124. Rawls argues that both species of egoism are ruled out by formal constraints on the theory of justice. See 132 and 135–136.

44. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 73.

conceit or “first-person dictatorship” is *struck down* by pure practical reason because it amounts to a direct challenge to the supremely authoritative status of the moral law. *Self-conceit* is the claim that my inclinations should serve as the supreme ground of everyone’s maxim-choice—that my inclinations should supplant the moral law from its rightful place. It is a claim to absoluteness made on behalf of something that cannot be an absolute ground. Thus, although there is room within morality for morally conditioned *self-love*, there is no room whatsoever for *self-conceit*. We experience moral constraint, then, in two different forms: the law *restricts* our *self-love* and *strikes down* our *self-conceit*.

Now we can say that the *striking down* of our *self-conceit* is one feature of the moral consciousness to which we are brought by the original example. I have a natural tendency to want my own inclinations to be the highest law of everyone’s action; but in considering the example that pits my inclinations as a whole against the moral law, I see that the law outweighs my inclinations, that I ought to die on the gallows rather than act immorally. But, Kant argues: “Now, what in our own judgment infringes upon our self-conceit humiliates [*dehmütigt*]. Hence the moral law inevitably humiliates every human being when he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature.”⁴⁵ When I consider the example, I am *humiliated*. But humiliation is a *feeling*: a negative feeling of displeasure. So the mere idea of the moral law, when considered in a concrete example of characteristically human choice, produces a negative feeling expressing the moral law’s inevitable constraint of my natural human drive to *self-conceit*. Thus acknowledgment of the normative force of the moral law *necessitates* a negative, painful feeling.

It seems that Kant has shown at most that acknowledgment of the normative force of the moral law can produce a negative feeling, not that it can positively move me to action. But Kant claims that the *a priori* feeling produced in the consideration of such examples has a *positive* as well as a *negative* aspect. His idea seems to be as follows. *Self-conceit* directly opposes the moral law, claiming its place as my ultimate practical reason. So *self-conceit* may be said to *negate* the claims of morality. But when the moral law strikes down *self-conceit*, humiliating me, it thereby negates the negation of the claims of morality. Consequently the idea of the moral law clears the space, as it were, for my adoption of the moral law as my ultimate reason. Thus my humiliation is not merely negative, but positively assists

45. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 74.

the claims of morality. Since, in considering the example, I am conscious of myself as responsible for the moral law by means of the *Factum* of reason, the effect of the example on my feeling has two aspects. As an empirical subject of inclinations, I am *humiliated*, but as a rational, autonomous legislator of the moral law, I am *elevated*. Since, Kant argues, I feel respect for whatever humiliates me, it follows that I feel respect for the moral law and for myself as its legislator. Thus the idea of the moral law, as considered in the example, necessitates an effect upon my feelings that removes the obstacle of self-conceit, clearing the way for moral action.

In what I earlier called standard motivation, feeling *precedes* the determination of the will: my feeling for a certain end moves my will to action. But in moral motivation, feeling of respect *succeeds* the determination of the will: the moral law determines my will by issuing an obligation, and that obligation strikes down my self-conceit, allowing my already determined will to issue in action. The feeling of respect is not a prior condition for determination of the will by the moral law, for the moral law determines the will unconditionally, immediately. However, that unconditional will-determination expresses itself empirically through the feeling of respect, thus allowing humans, who have both reason and feelings, to act morally.

If Kant's description of moral psychology is right, then serious consideration of his example should produce just the feeling of respect that can clear the path for moral action. Since I feel respect when the moral law opposes *all* my inclinations, Kant thinks it follows that the feeling of respect does not *depend* on any particular inclination to which I happen to be subject. So *if* we feel respect when we seriously imagine the example, then we are capable of action necessitated by the moral law. But then we are capable of freely initiating a causal series. In other words, we are practically spontaneous. And if we are practically free, then, by the Reciprocity Thesis, the moral law ought to be our ultimate reason, on pain of irrationality. Thus we reach the desired conclusion of the Deduction of Freedom, justifying both freedom and morality.

At this point I want to emphasize a crucial difference between previous readings of Kant's deduction and the Fichtean reading proposed here. Even Allison's interpretation—perhaps the most sympathetic offered so far—has portrayed its conclusion as follows: our consciousness of moral constraint commits us to the *belief* that we are capable of respect and therefore to the *belief* that we are practically free.⁴⁶ But, as critics like Barbara Herman have

46. Allison does not understand the *Factum* as a deed, but he comes close to this idea in Allison

argued, in a fashion reminiscent of Aenesidemus and Stroud, this conclusion is not an adequate response to the skeptical concern because it leaves open the possibility that although we necessarily *believe* we are free, our belief may still be *false*. On my reading, however, the deduction reaches its conclusion only when we readers realize that, in the moral consciousness induced by the example, we *actually feel* respect. By producing an instance of motivation by the moral law—a rationally necessitated will-determination—we *actualize* our practical freedom and so demonstrate that we are really free.

Thus, in the *Factum* of reason, I take up the standpoint of freedom. I take up this standpoint whenever I act morally, and I need no philosophical education to do so, according to Kant. But here I take up the standpoint

(1988), where he suggests that the deduction has an essentially performative nature and involves an act of freedom. (I should note that, although I am emphasizing the active nature of the deduction even more than Allison, I do not wish to follow him in calling the deduction *performative*. The confusions surrounding Austin's use of that term and Hintikka's interpretation of the *cogito* are too thick and intertwined to disentangle here.) However, Allison does not identify the deduction with the whole Analytic and therefore interprets the performance in question only as taking an interest in or submitting to the moral law, not as bringing about in oneself the feeling of respect. The result is to leave his interpretation vulnerable to the following objection raised by Barbara Herman: "If the fact of reason could show that I can act out of respect for the moral law if I choose to, transcendental freedom would follow. What I cannot see is how any performance of submitting could show that acting from respect for the moral law was possible, when it was just the possibility of so acting that was in question. What the fact of reason so understood show is that in submitting to the moral law we cannot doubt that acting from respect for the moral law is possible. The fact of reason might thus explain why so many *believe* we can act from respect for the moral law. Such conviction, however, does not bootstrap us up to transcendental freedom." See Herman (1988), 135. I suspect that it is because of this objection that Allison's second version of the interpretation, in Allison (1990), makes no reference to the performative nature of the deduction, although he still emphasizes taking an interest in morality. Some of his formulations here suggest the line I take, such as: "Kant's position is . . . that freedom is actual, or better, actualized, in the interest that we take in the moral law" (248). But others show that Allison himself does not take this line, such as: "This consciousness [provoked by the question whether I could face certain death for the sake of the moral law] . . . is of a mere possibility rather than an actual capacity" (246). Allison's second version is still vulnerable to Herman's objection. For this version depends on the claim that "one cannot acknowledge a motive and deny the *possibility* of being motivated by it" (241). Herman could object that the deduction shows only that in acknowledging my interest I *cannot doubt* that I am capable of being motivated by it, not I *actually am capable*. My interpretation of the deduction is not vulnerable to this objection in the same way because the active nature of the deduction consists in the *actualization* of the capacity for motivation by the moral law, in the determining of the will that sensibly manifests itself as the feeling of respect. If I actualize a capacity, then I show that I actually possess the capacity. In contrast, the response to Herman suggested by Allison (2004) is that there is no fact of the matter whether I actually am capable, since there are no facts of the matter about things in themselves.

self-consciously and for the sake of philosophizing, not immediately for the sake of deliberation and action. The idea that I can philosophize from the standpoint of practice, not theory, is truly remarkable.

Although Kant is nowhere as explicit as I have been about the deductive role of the feeling of respect, some of his formulations seem to support my interpretation. For example:

The objective reality of a pure will or, what is the same thing, of a pure practical reason is given *a priori* in the moral law as it were by a *Factum*—for so we may call a determination of the will that is unavoidable, even though it does not rest on empirical principles.⁴⁷

It was also found in the Dialectic of pure speculative reason that the two seemingly opposed ways of finding the unconditioned for the conditioned—in the synthesis of causality, for example, to think for the conditioned in the series of causes and effects for the sensible world a causality that is not further sensibly conditioned—did not in fact contradict each other, and that the same action which, as belonging to the sensible world, is always sensibly conditioned—that is, mechanically necessary—can at the same time, as belonging to the causality of an acting being so far as it belongs to the intelligible world, have as its basis a sensibly unconditioned causality and so be thought as free. Then the only point at issue was whether this *can* could be changed into *is*, that is, whether one could show in an actual case, as it were, through a *Factum* [*in einem wirklichen Falle gleichsam durch ein Factum*], that certain actions [*gewisse Handlungen*] presuppose such a causality (intellectual, sensibly unconditioned causality), regardless of whether such actions are actual or only commanded, that is, objectively practically necessary.⁴⁸

In the first passage Kant characterizes the *Factum* as “a determination of the will.” To invoke Fichte’s criticism of Reinhold’s interpretation of Kant, Kant is surely referring not to the autonomy of pure practical reason but rather to that resolution of the individual will against self-love and in favor of the moral law manifested by the feeling of respect. In the second passage Kant speaks of proving the reality of freedom by means of “an actual case,” which suggests again that the proof essentially involves an occasion for actual will-determination.

Kant says that it is irrelevant whether the “actions” presupposing freedom

47. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 55.

48. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 104.

“are actual or only commanded,” which might suggest that the proof does not involve an actualization of freedom. But Kant may be interpreted here as saying that what is irrelevant is whether the actual determination of the will is translated into *behavior*, which involves not only resolution but also opportunity and autocracy or self-control. For it is Kant’s view that we can never be certain that any particular behavior is motivated by the moral law.⁴⁹ If, however, we could not be certain that we are actually determining our wills in accordance with the moral law—that we are actually feeling respect—then the Deduction of Freedom as I have interpreted it would be impossible. I take Kant to be saying in this passage, then, that our uncertainty about whether our actual behavior is commanded behavior is irrelevant to the Deduction of Freedom. In contrast, our certainty about *actual will-determination* is of the utmost relevance. What is crucial, it should be emphasized, is not my certainty that I would die for the moral law if necessary. If, when I contemplate the choice between duty and life, I feel ashamed at the thought that I would not choose duty, then that is enough. My shame is the negative aspect of respect, and it shows that I am performing the relevant action: determining my will by acknowledging the supreme normative force of the moral law.

Two passages from the 1790s in which Kant characterizes the deduction also seem to confirm the proposed interpretation. First, in a passage from a letter written in 1790 Kant uses a formulation that might serve as a motto for the current proposal: “The concept of freedom, as causality, is apprehended in an affirmation [*bejahend erkannt*].”⁵⁰ Second, and more significantly, Kant writes in the *Critique of Judgment*:

Objects of concepts whose objective reality can be proved are matters of fact (*res facti*). . . . It is very remarkable, however that even a rational idea is to be found among the matters of fact . . . : the idea of freedom; the reality of this idea, as [the idea of] a special kind of causality . . . can be established through practical laws of pure reason and, in conformity with these, in actual acts, and hence in experience. Among all the ideas of pure reason this is the only one whose object is a matter of fact and must be

49. See, for example, Kant (1900–), GMM, 4: 407: “In fact, it is absolutely impossible by means of experience to make out with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action otherwise in conformity to duty rested simply on moral grounds and on the representation of one’s duty.”

50. Kant to Kiesewetter, 20 April 1790, in Kant (1900–), 11: 155.

included among the *scibilia* . . . What always remains very remarkable about this is that among the three pure ideas of reason, God, freedom, and immortality, that of freedom is the only concept of the supersensible which (by means of the causality that we think in it) proves in nature that it has objective reality, by the effects it can produce in it.⁵¹

Here Kant emphasizes that freedom proves its objective reality through “actual acts,” “the effects it can produce in” nature, and he explains that this is what it means for freedom to be a “matter of fact” (*Tatsache, res facti*). Again these acts or effects cannot be actual *behavior* produced through freedom, out of respect for the moral law, since we can never be *certain* that any actual behavior is so produced. What then could they be, if not *actualizations of the capacity for respect*, or determinations of the will in accordance with the moral law?

We can now see how Kant’s deductive strategy is circular without being vicious. The strategy is circular if represented as an argument from premise to conclusion: it starts with a belief in the validity of morality and concludes with a belief in the reality of freedom, but the premise presupposes the conclusion and has no independent justification. However, if one takes into account the transformation of the *subject* who makes the transition from premise to conclusion, then one sees that the circularity is not vicious. When I am brought, at the beginning of the deduction, by means of examples, to acknowledge the moral law, I have a theoretical reason—the causal law—to worry that my moral consciousness is illusory, even if it is necessary from the practical point of view. As the Third Antinomy shows, that theoretical ground is not compelling, but nevertheless the epistemic possibility that I might not be free is open: I might not be free, *for all I know*. But when I actualize my freedom, I provide myself with a ground that closes off that epistemic possibility: since I can actualize my freedom, I must actually be free and I have an actual ground for rejecting the worry that moral consciousness might be illusory. And at this point, since I am actually free and since my freedom gives me practical cognition of myself as I am in myself, an inhabitant of the intelligible world, I can see in retrospect that it was not really possible at the outset that I might not be free, for if I were not free then I would not be me. Thus my self-legislation of the moral law—manifesting itself through the feeling of respect—pro-

51. Kant (1900–), KU, 5: 468, 474.

vides a *ratio cognoscendi* or epistemic ground for my cognition of freedom, while the actualization of my freedom provides a *ratio essendi* or ontic ground for my self-legislation of the moral law.

My passage from premise to conclusion is not viciously circular because I am transformed in two ways during the transition. First, I pass from mere consciousness of the moral law to actual will-determination. Second, I pass from practically necessary but doubtful belief in freedom to practically necessary and well-grounded cognition of freedom. It is true that the idea of the moral law and the idea of practical freedom form a circle of mutual entailment. But if I trace that circle in the way Kant wants, I do not end up back where I started. *For I am transformed along the way.*

An important consequence of this procedure is the peculiarly *first person singular* character of Kant's deduction and, accordingly, of practical cognition and belief. Kant already anticipates this view in the first *Critique*. There Kant explains that what he calls "moral belief" in God and immortality is not on the same scale as theoretical opinion, belief, and knowledge. The certainty of moral belief is not logical but moral, "and since it rests on subjective grounds (of the moral sentiment), I must not even say, 'It is morally certain that there is a God, etc.,' but 'I am morally certain, etc.'"⁵² Moral belief has universal validity, but because it rests upon subjective grounds—subjective grounds available to all human beings in virtue of their rationality—it is unlike theoretical belief and can never become *knowledge*. For, "All knowledge [Wissen], if it concerns an object of mere reason, can be communicated." As we have seen, Kant is prepared to speak of practical cognition (*Erkenntnis*), at least of subjection to the moral law, in the second *Critique* when he thinks that he has succeeded at last in deducing freedom. But this cognition can never become knowledge, because it remains first person singular.

This feature of the cognition justified through the Deduction of Freedom underlies Kant's discussion in 1796 of what he calls the "true secret" of philosophy, a "secret which can become *possible to feel*."⁵³ Here Kant is responding to Johann Georg Schlosser, brother-in-law of Goethe and friend of Jacobi, who had attacked Kant in the introduction and footnotes to his translation of Plato's letters.⁵⁴ In Schlosser's view, true philosophy is a

52. Kant (1900–), KrV, B857.

53. Kant (1900–), VTP, 8: 403.

54. Schlosser (1795), xiv, 180–184n., 194–195n.

matter of refined feeling expressed poetically and mythically, and Kant has sought to clip the wings of metaphysics because he lacks the necessary innate spark. By restricting philosophy to that about which we can be *certain*, Kant has not purified but has rather *emasculated* reason. He has so *sublimized* virtue, God and immortality, that the next generation of his adherents, wholly bereft of prejudice and superstition, are likely to fall into "the most lawless libertinism."⁵⁵ In contrast, the esoteric Platonism that Schlosser finds in Plato's *Seventh Letter* emphasizes the *feelings* of its initiates. Those who attain immediate intuition thereby experience what Schlosser calls a *presentiment* (*Ahnung*) of the veiled goddess Isis.⁵⁶ Although Schlosser never says so explicitly, he implies that this feeling, experience, or presentiment will inspire the initiate and effect a genuine moral improvement.

Now Schlosser gives no clear account of *how* *Seventh Letter* esotericism improves its adherents, nor does he address the questions raised by the fact that only a few people are capable of initiation: *Seventh Letter* esotericism is hardly likely to have any moral effect whatsoever on the masses it excludes. But what stands out from Schlosser's attack on Kant is the claim that Kant's critical philosophy fails to engage our feelings and therefore cannot motivate us to morality. It is the desire to respond to this claim that leads Kant to the surprising thesis that it is the critical philosophy that has discovered an inexplicable secret, a secret that cannot be told but that can be felt.

Kant's account of this "true secret" turns out to be another version of the Deduction of Freedom. Thus Kant first characterizes what he takes to be the universal response to examples of the kind adduced in the second *Critique*: "Now every man finds in his reason the idea of duty, and trembles on hearing its brazen voice, when inclinations arise in him, which tempt him to disobedience towards it. He is persuaded that, even though the latter all collectively conspire against it, the majesty of the law, which his own reason prescribes to him, must yet unhesitatingly outweigh them all, and that his will is also capable of this."⁵⁷ He then raises what he takes to be the key question: "What is it in me which brings it about that I can sacrifice the innermost allurements of my instincts, and all wishes that

55. Schlosser (1795), 184n.

56. Ibid.

57. Kant (1900-), VTP, 8: 402.

proceed from my nature, to a law which promises me no compensating advantage, and threatens no loss on its violation; a law, indeed, which I respect the more intimately, the more strictly it ordains, and the less it offers for doing so?" This question is unanswerable, and therein lies the mystery as well as the moral benefit of Kant's philosophy:

By astonishment at the magnitude and sublimity of the inner disposition in mankind, and at the same time the impenetrability of the mystery that veils it (for the answer, it is *freedom*, would be tautological, since that is precisely what constitutes the mystery), this question arouses the whole soul. We can never grow weary of giving attention to it, and admiring in itself a power that yields to no power in Nature; and this admiration is simply the feeling produced by Ideas, and if, besides the teaching of morality in school and pulpit, the presentation of this mystery were made a special and oft-repeated topic of instruction, this feeling would penetrate deep into the soul, nor would it fail to make men morally *better*.⁵⁸

Kant's point here is that I can cognize my freedom, but only through first person singular consideration of the normative force of the moral law compared with that of all my inclinations. Consequently, I can cognize the *actuality* of freedom, although I cannot comprehend what makes it *possible*. It is just here, as he goes on to say, that we find what Archimedes sought:

a fixed point to which reason can apply its lever, in order by its principle to move the human will, even when the whole of Nature resists it; and this without resting it either upon the present or a future world, but merely upon its inner Idea of freedom, which lies there as a sure foundation through the unshakable moral law. This, then, is the secret which can become *possible to feel* only after slow development of the concepts of the understanding, and of carefully tested principles and thus only through work. It is given, not empirically (proposed to reason for solution), but *a priori* (as actual insight within the bounds of our reason), and even extends rational knowledge up to the super-sensible, but only in a practical respect: not, say, by a *feeling*, which purports to be the basis of knowledge (the mystical), but by a clear *cognition* which acts upon feeling (the moral).⁵⁹

In other words, through consideration of my response to cases in which duty opposes all my inclinations, I find the standpoint beyond the sensible world from which reason can move the human will in a way that manifests

58. Kant (1900-), VTP, 8: 402-463.

59. Kant (1900-), VTP, 8: 403.

itself sensibly through the feeling of respect for the moral law. To bring myself into this condition is to bring myself into the condition appropriate for moral action, so it is morally improving. Although this procedure is first person singular, it is available to every human being and hence universally valid. Unlike the divine spark claimed by Schlosser as innate to the few, the capacity for respect—and hence for practical cognition of the supersensible—involves labor, not superior birth.

On this basis, which coheres well with the Fichtean interpretation of the Deduction of Freedom developed above, Kant provides us with an appropriately critical way of construing the key terms of esotericist tradition. Thus Kant joins Schlosser in worshipping the veiled goddess, Isis, but identifies her with the moral law, Kant, too, recognizes the possibility of a “presentiment” (*Ahnung*) of the goddess, which he characterizes as being “guided by moral *feeling* to concepts of duty, before having yet been able to make *clear* to oneself the principles on which this feeling depends.”⁶⁰ Thus Kant offers an account of the obscurity of his moral philosophy, which he diagnoses in terms of the mystery of practical freedom itself. This obscurity is compatible with universal validity, but it puts Kant in a position with respect to Schlosser and other opponents that is quite unlike the position of someone who wants to convince others about some theoretical principle that is synthetic *a priori*. If someone resists, say, the claim that the causal law is a synthetic *a priori* principle of the possibility of experience, then Kant should be able to show her, if he is right, that she already presupposes what she does not want to accept and that she would be contradicting herself by rejecting it. Although people frequently contradict themselves, there is a sense in which they are not free to do so once the contradiction has been pointed out. But, as Kant says at the end of his response to Schlosser: “‘if,’ as Fontenelle said on another occasion, ‘Monsieur N. is still quite determined to believe in the oracle, nobody can prevent him.’”⁶¹ In other words, there is a sense in which Schlosser is free to reject Kant’s claims about freedom, even if they are true. For it follows from those claims that we are all free to be heteronomous, to repudiate through individual *Willkür* the law that *Wille* legislates to itself.⁶²

In broad terms, the deductive strategy developed by Kant in the second

60. Kant (1900–), VTP, 8: 405.

61. Kant (1900–), VTP, 8: 406.

62. Kant draws this distinction in his 1793 *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Roughly, *Wille* is the will considered as rational agency, whereas *Willkür* is the will considered as the power to choose, here is capable of irrationality. For useful discussion, see Meebas (1982).

Critique may be described as follows. By means of an act or *Tathandlung*, an absolute first principle—in this case, the moral law self-legislated by *Wille*—is demonstrated not only as normatively supreme but also as effective. It thereby becomes the *ratio cognoscendi* of the absolute condition—in this case, the practical freedom of *Willkür*—without whose actualization the principle could not be effective. This absolute condition is the *ratio essendi* of the absolute first principle. The relationship between the absolute condition and the absolute principle is circular, yet the circle is virtuous because the argument is not a linear transition from premise to conclusion, but rather the taking up of a standpoint: a first person singular transformation of the subject's self-consciousness, in which I come to see my agency not only as *Willkür* but also as *Wille*—as pure practical reason. At the same time, however, because this transformation is a free activity of the subject, the deduction is peculiarly open to free rejection.

5.4

Having interpreted Kant's Deduction of Freedom in a way suggested but not developed by Fichte—not as appeal to a fact of consciousness that avoids skeptical issues, but rather as the solicitation of a first person singular, pure act or *Tathandlung* that manifests itself sensibly and that enables a response to skepticism—I now turn to the implications of this deductive strategy for the German idealist project.

On the one hand, Kant himself connects the Deduction of Freedom to the idea of the *ens realissimum*, from which German idealists hope to deduce the categories that are both necessary for and determinately applied in experience. On the other hand, what Kant says about the connection suggests that such a deduction is impossible.

In the second *Critique*, while discussing the postulates of pure practical reason, Kant explains that, through these postulates, the moral law and the highest good “lead to concepts that speculative reason could indeed present as problems but could never solve.”⁶³ His third example is the concept of God: “As for that which speculative reason had to think but to leave undetermined as mere transcendental *ideal*, the *theological* concept of the original being, it furnishes significance to this (for practical purposes, i.e., as a condition of the possibility of the object of a will determined by that law), as the supreme principle of the highest good in an intelligible world, by

63. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 132.

means of moral lawgiving accompanied by power in it."⁶⁴ One might take this to mean that the basic ideas of rational theology are now to be discarded, replaced by new and unrelated practical ideas. But, in a footnote to his response to Schlosser, Kant notes that the Deduction of Freedom and the subsequent derivation of the postulates of God and immortality amounts to a *reworking* of the transcendental ideal from a practical point of view: "The transcendental concept of God, as the *ens realissimum*, cannot be circumvented in philosophy, however abstract such a concept may be; for it pertains to the union and at the same time the elucidation, of everything concrete that may subsequently enter into applied theology and theory of religion."⁶⁵ Kant goes on to argue that the *ens realissimum* must be thought not as the sum-total, but rather as the ground of all realities. This is a familiar point that Kant has made both in his pre-critical writings and in the first *Critique*. Here, however, the discussion takes an unfamiliar turn. Kant argues, not only that to think God as the sum-total of all realities leads to illicit anthropomorphism, but also that God can be adequately thought as the ground of all realities *only from the practical point of view*:

But if I frame to myself the concept of the *ens realissimum* as the ground of all reality, I am saying that God is the being who contains the ground of everything in the world *for which we men have need to suppose an understanding* (e.g., everything purposive therein); he is the being from whom the existence of all worldly being originates, not out of the necessity of his *nature* (*per emanationem*), but according to a circumstance for which *we men* are obliged to suppose a *free will*, in order to make the possibility thereof intelligible to us. Now here what the *nature* of the supreme being may be (objectively) can be posited as wholly inscrutable to us, and quite beyond the sphere of any theoretical knowledge possible to us, and yet reality still be (subjectively) left to these concepts *in a practical respect* (with regard to the course of life); in relation to which, also, an *analogy* of the divine understanding and will to that of man and his practical reason can alone be assumed, notwithstanding that in a theoretical sense there is absolutely no analogy between them. From the moral law which our own reason authoritatively prescribes to us, and not from any theory of the nature of things-in-themselves, there now proceeds the concept of God which practical pure reason constrains us to *make for ourselves*.⁶⁶

64. Kant (1900-), KpV, 5: 133.

65. Kant (1900-), VTP, 8: 399n.

66. Kant (1900-), VTP, 8: 400-401n.

This idea—that the absolutely infinite realities which may be ascribed to the *ens realissimum* without fear of anthropomorphism are *practical* realities—is already mentioned “in passing” in a footnote to the second *Critique*:

Although one ascribes to God various attributes the quality of which is found appropriate to creatures as well except that in him they are raised to the highest degree, e.g., power, knowledge, presence, goodness, and so forth, there are still three that are ascribed to God exclusively and yet without the addition of greatness, and all of them are moral: he is the *only holy*, the *only blessed*, the *only wise*, because these concepts already imply the absence of limitation. According to the order of these attributes he is also the *holy lawgiver* (and creator), the *beneficent governor* (and preserver), and the *just judge*—three attributes which include everything by which God is the object of religion and in conformity with which the metaphysical perfections are added of themselves in reason.⁶⁷

These absolutely infinite practical realities, then, are appropriate for a progressive Metaphysical Deduction from the idea of the *ens realissimum*. However, it would seem impossible to deduce categories capable of *theoretical* use from the idea thus characterized.

In fact, however, there *could* be hope of employing the deductive strategy of Kant's Deduction of Freedom in order to deduce categories for theoretical as well as practical use, but only if practical and theoretical philosophy are not as separate as they are in Kant's critical philosophy—only if, say, there is an essential moment of practical freedom in theoretical cognition. This is exactly the point of Fichte's characterization, not only of consciousness of the moral law, but also of the pure self-consciousness involved in theoretical cognition, as both *Tathandlung* and intellectual intuition.

These are hardly promising claims. A deduction of the categories from the idea of the *ens realissimum* would *have* to retrace God's intellectual intuition of His absolutely infinite realities, which ground the sum-total of possible reality. But how may we humans participate in divine cognition? It is central to Kant's view of human finitude that our cognition is discursive and that we do not have intellectual intuition, of which only God could be capable, of which we cannot even conceive.

I do not think that German idealists simply deny the finitude of human beings, or even reject the Kantian idea that this finitude involves the unavoidable use of concepts in cognition. As Holistic Monists, however, they

67. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 131n. See Fichte (1964–), VKO, I/1: 135–137.

reconfigure the relationship between finite humans and the infinite yet immanent God.

To explain the German idealist use of the notion of intellectual intuition, I will consider first the claim that consciousness of the moral law is intellectual intuition, and then the claim that intellectual intuition is a transcendently necessary condition of all consciousness, including theoretical cognition. I will then consider the relationship within Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* between these two intellectual intuitions.

5.5

In his *Second Introduction*, Fichte says: "Our consciousness of the categorical imperative is undoubtedly immediate, but it is not a form of sensory consciousness. In other words, it is precisely what I call 'intellectual intuition'."⁶⁸ An earlier passage suggests that Fichte understands consciousness of the moral law in the way that I interpreted earlier:

By exhibiting the ethical law within us . . . the I becomes characterized as something absolutely active. Our intuition of self-activity and freedom has its foundation in our consciousness of this law, which is unquestionably not a type of consciousness derived from anything else, but is instead an immediate consciousness. Here I am given to myself, by myself, as something that is obliged to be active in a certain way. Accordingly, I am given to myself, by myself, as "active in an overall sense" or "as such." I possess life within myself and draw it from myself. It is only through the medium of the ethical law that I catch a glimpse of *myself*; and insofar as I view myself through this medium, I necessarily view myself as self-active. In this way an entirely alien ingredient, viz., my consciousness of my own real efficacy, arises for me within a consciousness that otherwise would be nothing but a consciousness of a particular sequence of my representations.⁶⁹

Fichte accords epistemic priority to the moral law, through the immediate consciousness of which we achieve intuition of self-activity and freedom. He also emphasizes that this consciousness can be transformative, for through it "I catch a glimpse of *myself*," which can only mean that, apart from this consciousness, I do not know myself as I am in myself.

68. Fichte (1964-), VDWL, I/4: 225.

69. Fichte (1964-), VDWL, I/4: 219.

Moreover, he says that I thereby become conscious "of my own real efficacy." Does this mean that I become conscious of a capacity or—as in the interpretation of Kant's Deduction of Freedom proposed above—of an actualization of a capacity? That it means the latter is suggested by the following passages:

One becomes immediately conscious of one's freedom through the deed [*durch die Tat*], since one self-actively tears oneself loose from a state of indecision, and posits a definite purpose, because one posits it, especially if this purpose runs contrary to all our inclinations, and is nevertheless chosen for duty's sake.⁷⁰

Desire applies to all finite reason. Anyone who wants to be released from desire wants to be released from consciousness.

We cannot consider any finite, rational, conscious being to be holy, { [for] every finite, rational creature is conscious of a desire that strives in opposition to the above-mentioned law. . . . The union of pure willing and desire produces the feeling of an "ought," of an inner, categorical drive toward acting.⁷¹

In these passages, Fichte suggests that consciousness of freedom is attained through an act—in particular, through an act opposed to all my inclinations, or to the desire that strives in all finite beings against the law. The negation of this desire, which Kant calls self-conceit, "produces the feeling of an 'ought'"—the feeling, that is, of respect for the moral law. This negation is, then, the act through which consciousness of my freedom becomes possible.

But why give the designation "intellectual intuition" to this act that enables consciousness of my "self-activity," "freedom" and "real efficacy"? In brief, because it plays a role within practical cognition that is strictly analogous to the role played by sensible intuition, both pure and empirical, within theoretical cognition. It is the immediate relation to actuality that converts a mere linkage of concepts—"a particular sequence of my representations"—into a genuine cognition.

As we have already seen, Kant himself is well aware of this analogy of roles. Yet he denies that the actuality in question is intellectual intuition. There is a striking example in this passage:

70. Fichte (1964-), SS, I/5: 131.

71. Fichte (1964-), WLn, IV/2: 136.

Since in all precepts of pure practical reason it is only a question of the decision of the will and not of the natural conditions (of practical ability) for achieving its purpose, it thereby happens that the practical concepts *a priori* in relation to the supreme principle of freedom immediately become cognitions, not needing to wait upon intuitions in order to acquire a meaning. This happens for the noteworthy reason that they themselves produce the reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will)—an achievement which is in no way the business of theoretical concepts.⁷²

Kant is fully aware of the analogy between the role played by the acts whereby practical precepts produce the will-determinations to which they refer and the role played by intuitions in theoretical cognition. It is because of this awareness that he feels the need to deny that these acts are intellectual intuitions. But what is the justification for the denial? It is simply, Fichte says, that Kant already has an established usage of the term *intellectual intuition*:

In Kantian terminology every intuition is directed at some being (a posited being, something fixed and enduring). Accordingly, "intellectual intuition" would, in this case, have to be a consciousness of a non-sensible being, an immediate consciousness of the thing in itself, and indeed a consciousness made possible by thought alone. I.e., it would amount to a creation of the thing in itself simply from the very concept of the same (similar to the way in which those who demonstrate the existence of God from the mere concept thereof must view God's existence as nothing more than a consequence of their own thinking.)⁷³

But Fichte has no room for this usage. His idealism is a Two Aspects, not a Two Essences view: "all being is sensible being."⁷⁴ Moreover, his Two Aspects idealism is committed to Holistic Monism, so he does not regard the *ens realissimum* as a being, but rather as the immanent principle of the totality of possible beings. Consequently, there is no reason why he should not use the term *intellectual intuition* where it seems appropriate: "The intellectual intuition of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* speaks is not directed toward any sort of being whatsoever; instead it is directed at an acting . . ."⁷⁵

72. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 67.

73. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 224–225.

74. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 225.

75. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 225.

Consciousness of the moral law, and thereby of my individual freedom to obey or disobey that law, involves both immediacy—in the senses of unconditionality discussed above—and singularity—of the individual *Willkür*. Immediacy and singularity are the two distinguishing marks of intuition, while this consciousness is *a priori* and involves opposition to all inclinations or sensible sources of motivation. So, if the term *intellectual intuition* has no preexisting usage within German idealism and there is therefore no confusion to prevent, why *not* say that consciousness of the moral law involves intellectual intuition of my freedom?⁷⁶

Fichte also speaks of what Kant calls “pure consciousness”—or, better, “pure self-consciousness”—as intellectual intuition. What case may be made for this?

It is often said that Fichte conflates the necessary capacity for self-consciousness with the necessary actuality of self-consciousness.⁷⁷ Certainly, Fichte insists on an actual self-consciousness conditioning every act of consciousness. Although Kant famously says that “The ‘I think’ must be capable of accompanying all of my representations,”⁷⁸ Fichte paraphrases the point as follows: “as Kant puts it: All of my representations must be capable of being accompanied by the ‘I think’ and must be thought of as accompanied thereby.”⁷⁹ Why?

Note first that Fichte speaks about what is required *for consciousness*. However, “consciousness” is a notoriously slippery term, which can contrast with “not being conscious” in the sense of carelessness or negligence, or with “unconscious” in the psychoanalyst’s sense or in the aesthetist’s, and so on. Rather than assuming that we know in advance what the term *consciousness* means, we should look at how Fichte uses the term in the context of his philosophical project. Since Fichte’s aspiration is to give an

76. I note that Rawls (2000), 253–272, gives an account of the *Factum* of reason within his interpretation of Kant’s moral philosophy as constructivist, and that he compares construction in the relevant sense with mathematical construction. See, for example, 238. Although Rawls contrasts constructivism with what he calls rational intuitionism, he does not consider the Fichtean possibility that morality could involve intellectual intuition. (It was through Rawls’s lectures at Harvard in the late 1980s and early 1990s that I first came to see the importance of the *Factum* of reason.)

77. See, for example, Castañeda (1990), 156 n.5.

78. Kant (1900–), KrV, B131.

79. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 253. Henrich (1992b), 50, suggests that KrV B132 may support Fichte’s reading, since Kant speaks there of pure apperception as “generating the representation ‘I think.’”

account of rational agency in general, the most charitable interpretation is the following: an act or state is conscious, in Fichte's sense, if it is accessible to the rational agency and the deliberation of the agent performing that act or in that state. Like Kant, Fichte thinks that some acts or states are *bewusstlos* or unconscious. These may have representational content, but their content is inaccessible to me as a rational agent.⁸⁰

On this construal of Fichtean consciousness, the Kantian thesis may be interpreted as follows: if I am to employ any representational content in my rational deliberation and agency, that content must be capable of being immediately ascribed to me. For example, if I am to make use of the perceived fact that an obstacle is obstructing my path of motion, then it is insufficient that I be in an informational state representing that fact. I must also be able to access that information and to relate it to my actual motion and to my desire to reach a certain destination. If I am to respond rationally to the situation, I must be able to think of *my* course of action, *my* desire, as obstructed—I must be able to think of the obstacle as an obstacle *for me*.

That the required capacity is for *immediate* self-ascription becomes clear from work by Wittgenstein, Hector-Neri Castañeda, Peter Geach, and G.E.M. Anscombe.⁸¹ Suppose, for example, that Fichte's path of motion is

80. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), VDWL, IV/4: 226–227, where Fichte distinguishes between conceptualized and unconceptualized intuitions, which are not conscious states in his sense because we become aware of them only through philosophical inference. See also Fichte (1964–), VDWL, IV/1: 196: “Our opinion on the matter is this: to be sure, there are representations which one can call obscure or without consciousness. One only arrives at conceptions of them insofar as one infers their presence from something that is actually present. These obscure representations are called intuitions.” Thus I disagree with the suggestion made by Ameriks that Fichte has “forgotten” Kant's notion of representations that are “nothing to me,” and that Fichte is committed to the view that there can be no representation without consciousness. See Ameriks (2000a), 239, 250 n.38. This suggestion underlies Ameriks's unsympathetic discussion of Fichte's view of self-positing.

81. Wittgenstein (1958), 66–68, points out that it is impossible, when making a statement involving use of “I as subject,” to misidentify the person about whom one is speaking as the subject because these uses do not depend on the identification of any person as the subject. In later terminology, such statements are *immune* to error through misidentification because they are *unmediated* by identification. Castañeda develops the point in the idiom of analytic philosophy of language, arguing that the indirect reflexive is irreducible to the direct reflexive and, indeed, that the first-person pronoun is irreducible to any other semantic device. See the articles collected in Castañeda (1999). Geach (1972), 128–129, observes that the peculiarities of the first-person pronoun may also be seen in certain third-person statements, which involve what he calls “an *oratio obliqua* proxy for the first-person pronoun of *oratio recta*.” These points are famously deployed by Anscombe (1975), who offers, in effect, the following *modus tollens*: “I,” the characteristic expression of self-consciousness, has the ontological priority and hence the irreducibility noted by Cas-

obstructed by a carelessly abandoned pile of books—say, the collected works of Kant. If Fichte is to respond rationally to the situation, it is not sufficient that he be able to think of J. G. Fichte, or of “the first great post-Kantian,” or even of “this person here,” as obstructed, even if those designations in fact refer to him. He must also be able to think of J. G. Fichte, or of “the first great post-Kantian,” or even of “this person here,” as *himself*. Since immediate self-reference is irreducible to any other variety of reference, it follows that immediate self-ascription is irreducible to any other variety of ascription. Any content that I employ in my rational deliberation and agency must be capable of being immediately ascribed to me. If I were capable of ascribing some content *only mediately* to myself, the content would not be accessible to me as a rational agent.⁸²

Still, why should Fichte think that the capacity for immediate self-ascription requires some sort of *actual* self-consciousness that conditions my rationally accessible representations?⁸³ Because, I suggest, Fichte holds—along with many contemporary analytic philosophers—that capacities and, more generally, *possibilities* cannot be metaphysically basic, but must be grounded in *actualities*. As Nelson Goodman put it: “the peculiarity of dispositional predicates is that they seem to be applied to things in virtue of possible rather than actual occurrences—and possible occurrences are . . . no more admissible as unexplained elements than are occult capacities.”⁸⁴ Fichte makes the point in his own way, as a claim about our

tañeda, since, regarded as a referential device, it is both guaranteed to refer; and guaranteed to refer to that to which it purports to refer; if “I” is a referential device, then it could only refer to a Cartesian ego, for no entity of any other kind could guarantee reference in the relevant way; therefore, “I” is not a referential device, and the self-consciousness it characteristically expresses is not consciousness of an entity called “the self.”

82. See, for example, Shoemaker (1996), 16–17: “As recent writers have noted, one of the distinctive features of first-person belief is the role it plays in the explanation of behavior. Having a genuine first-person belief, of the sort one expresses by saying “I,” is not merely a matter of believing something of what is in fact oneself. To use David Kaplan’s example, if I merely believe of the person I in fact am that his pants are on fire (I see someone in the mirror with his pants on fire, but do not realize that it is me), this will not influence my behavior in the way that the belief I would express by saying “My pants are on fire!” would. It seems reasonable to hold that part of what makes a belief a belief about the person who has it (in the way beliefs expressed by first-person sentences are about the speaker) is the fact that it plays this distinctive role in the determination of action.”

83. See Ameriks (2000), 250–255, discussing Neuhausser (1990), 68–102, for the argument that the requirement for a constant and actual self-consciousness is unreasonably strong. Ameriks assumes, however, that Fichte is committed to the constancy of this self-consciousness throughout every representational state. See n.80.

84. Goodman (1965), 42.

capacity to posit things: "A merely possible efficacy, or an efficacy in general is only posited through abstraction from a certain [efficacy], or from all *actual* [efficacies]; but, before something can be abstracted from, it must be posited."⁸⁵

If this claim is combined with the claim explored earlier—that immediate self-ascription is irreducible to any mediated self-ascription—then we will need to find an actual ground for the capacity to immediately self-ascribe. We might attribute to Fichte the following line of thought: if the capacity for immediate self-ascription is irreducibly a capacity for *immediacy*, then the actual ground for that capacity must *already* involve immediacy. On this view, I am able to produce thoughts of this irreducibly peculiar kind because I am merely making explicit an implicit actuality that is *already* of this irreducibly peculiar kind. Any other explanation of the capacity for immediate self-ascription will have to explain where the irreducible immediacy comes from.

We are now prepared to make sense of Fichte's central claim: that the immediate actuality that grounds the capacity for attaching the "I think" is "*an act of self-positing as positing*."⁸⁶ What Fichte means is that the immediate actuality is an existential commitment with respect to oneself as the agent engaged in making existential commitments, predications, or inferences. Unlike other existential commitments, this one is necessarily presupposed by the capacity for rational agency. Any other existential commitment must presuppose existential commitment by the rational agent to herself as the positing agent. Thus the act of self-positing has an *absoluteness* surpassing that of any other existential commitment: positing myself as positing is the condition of any other act of positing, but it is itself *unconditioned* by any other act of positing.

Attending to the literal meaning of "*setzen*"—a commonplace German word meaning "to place" or "to locate"—I propose that we construe Fichtean positing as *locating* within what analytic philosophers call *the space of reasons*.⁸⁷ Thus, to posit a thing relatively or conditionally is to specify the location of that thing within the *omnitudo realitatis*, understood as a network of possible (existential, predicative, and inferential) commitments—a location that may be occupied only by a possible thing of a

85. Fichte (1964–), GNR, I/3: 341.

86. Fichte (1964–), I/4: 276.

87. See 354–359 below. Wittgenstein uses the term *logical space*, while "the space of reasons" is associated with Sellars and those influenced by him, notably Brandom and McDowell. Pippin (2000) also uses the notion in his discussion of Fichte.

specific kind. To posit a thing absolutely or unconditionally is to undertake the relevant commitments by affirming that a particular thing of that kind exists in an actual spatio-temporal location.⁸⁸ Both sorts of positing necessarily involve self-positing as self-positing: the actual location of the positing agent within the space of reasons as a positing agent, and the capacity of the positing agent to locate herself within space and time.

To understand why Fichte wants to characterize self-positing as self-positing in terms of intellectual intuition, it is helpful to consider a question raised by Geach and answered differently by John Perry and David Lewis. After distinguishing a third-person indirect reflexive proxy ("he himself") for the first-person pronoun, to be used in statements ascribing *de se* thoughts and utterances, Geach acknowledges a problem: "But if we say of a number of people that each of them believes that he himself is clever, what belief exactly are we attributing to all of them? Certainly they do not all believe the same proposition, as 'proposition' is commonly understood by philosophers."⁸⁹

Perry develops Geach's problem in several two-stage examples.⁹⁰ At stage one, the subject knows all the true propositions there are to know about his situation but cannot locate himself with respect to those facts. For instance, an amnesiac is lost in a library, despite having read the map of the library and his own up-to-date biography. Since he does not know that *he himself* is the person described in the biography as wandering in the library whose map he has read, the knowledge is of no use. At stage two, the subject succeeds in locating himself with respect to the facts. The amnesiac realizes that he himself is the person described in the biography as wandering on the eighth floor of the library; the knowledge already possessed becomes available for deliberation and action-guidance.

Perry asks how to characterize the change in the subjects' beliefs occurring in the transition from stage one to stage two. The "locating beliefs"⁹¹ acquired are "essentially indexical": they have the irreducible immediacy of first-personal beliefs and their third-personal equivalents employing the indirect reflexive. The problem is that locating beliefs cannot easily be accommodated by the doctrine that belief is an attitude towards proposi-

88. On relative and absolute positing, see Kant (1900-), EMBD, 2: 73.

89. Geach (1972), 129.

90. Perry (1993), Chapters 1 and 3.

91. Perry (1993), 35: "I shall use the term 'locating beliefs' to refer to one's beliefs about where one is, when it is, and who one is."

tions, as traditionally understood. As Perry puts it, any attempt to specify a locating belief in first-personal terms—for instance, by saying, “I am the amnesiac wandering on the eighth floor of the library”—seems, from the viewpoint of the traditional doctrine of propositions, to have “a missing conceptual ingredient.”⁹² From a Fichtean standpoint, however, we might say that any attempt to specify a locating belief in non-first-personal terms has a missing intuitive ingredient.

Lewis’s radical solution is to entirely abandon propositions as the objects of belief and desire: “I say that *all* belief is ‘self-locating belief.’ Belief *de dicto* is self-locating belief with respect to logical space; belief irreducibly *de se* is self-locating belief at least partly with respect to ordinary time and space, or with respect to the population. I propose that any kind of self-locating belief should be understood as self-ascription of properties.” In Lewis’s view, every belief or desire involves immediate self-ascription. Every belief or desire is a self-location in logical space, whereas some are also self-locations in empirical space.⁹³

Although Fichte is responding to Perry’s problem not but rather to the perceived demand for an actual ground of the capacity for immediate self-ascription and rational agency, his response has an affinity with Lewis’s proposal. For the ground in question is the activity of self-positing or self-locating in the space of reasons, an activity that *need not* be made explicit in every act of positing, but that is there *to be made explicit* when appropriate. Of course, this activity of self-positing is not a locating of myself in the space of reasons *as a particular individual*, conceived in a determinate way, on the basis of certain information. We are concerned only with that activity of self-positing that is presupposed by any act of positing whatsoever—namely, “the act of self-positing as positing,” the location of myself *as a locater in logical space*, as a thinker of determinate objects. For reasons quite different from Lewis’s, then, Fichte reaches an apparently similar conclusion: every act of consciousness is conditioned by an actual self-consciousness, or every positing involves an immediate self-positing as self-positing.⁹⁴

92. Perry (1993), 37.

93. Lewis (1979), 140.

94. Hence, Castañeda called Lewis’s view a kind of Fichteanism. See Castañeda (1987), 426: “The [Self-Ascription] View is nicely Fichtean in a moderate sense: all consciousness is diffusely self-consciousness, and all reference is tacit self-reference.” See 440 for Chisholm’s “subdued Fichteanism.” Differences between these views and Fichte’s deserve discussion elsewhere.

The act in question is, then, immediate and singular, since it relates to the subject signified by the first person singular. So it has the two distinguishing marks of an intuition. Moreover, this act of immediately positing myself as self-positing plays the role characteristic of an intuition, according to Fichte, because it enables me to have first personal cognition, in which I know what I am doing because I am the one doing it.⁹⁵ So there is good reason to call this act an intuition. Since the act in question is *a priori* necessary for any act of consciousness whatsoever and cannot be derived from anything sensible, Fichte calls it *intellectual* intuition.

Fichte's account of "pure self-consciousness" as intellectual intuition is further from Kant than Fichte's account of moral consciousness as intellectual intuition. In the latter case, it is largely a matter, in light of what seems to be Kant's view, of whether or not to use the term. In the former case, it is a matter of developing an account where Kant himself is particularly cagey, and then finding use of the term appropriate in light of this account, to which Kant is not committed and might be opposed.⁹⁶ Still, the view I have attributed to Fichte is not obviously incompatible with much of what Kant says on the topic, and it is philosophically interesting in its own right.

We are now able to understand why, in attributing intellectual intuition to us, Fichte does not take himself to be denying the discursive character of human cognition. As he uses the term, intellectual intuition is not intuition of a being, which would stand in need of neither sensible intuition nor conceptualization. Rather, intellectual intuition is intuition of my own activity. Here is how Fichte characterizes his position with respect to Kant and Schultz:

95. Two clarifications are necessary here. First, this is not to say that the mere activity of intellectual intuition in this sense *amounts* to empirical knowledge of my personal identity over time or that it *guarantees* the availability of such knowledge. At any rate, these claims are philosophically unfounded, I know no text in which Fichte clearly commits himself to them, and they seem unrelated to Fichte's philosophical concerns. Henrich's characterization of Fichtean self-positing as *self-knowledge* is at least suggestive of these claims. See Henrich (1971), (1982). Second, the immunity to error through misidentification of the subject who ascribes the act first personally to herself, does not pertain to the *content* ascribed to the act. It does not follow from Fichte's claim that first personal self-cognition involves self-intuition that claims to know what I am doing cannot be wrong about what I am doing. Again, I do not know any passage in which Fichte clearly commits himself to this problematic claim. However, in this case it does seem that such a claim is related to Fichte's project. For if descriptions of my immediately self-ascribed acts *were* incorrigible, then Fichte's philosophical descriptions could claim incorrigibility too.

96. See Ameriks (1982), Henrich (1992), Sturma (1985), and Klenzme (1996).

According to Kant, according to Schultz, and according to me, three elements are required for a complete representation: [1] There is that whereby the representation obtains a relation to an object and thus becomes a representation of *something*. We all agree in calling this "sensory intuition." (This remains true even when the object of representation is I myself. In this case I become for myself something that endures through time.) [2] There is that whereby the representation is related to a subject and thus becomes *my* representation. This, according to Kant and Schulz, should not be called "intuition." I, however, call it by this name, for it bears the same relationship to a complete representation that sensory intuition does. [3] Lastly, there is that whereby the first two elements are united and thus become a representation. Here again, we all agree in designating this a "concept."⁹⁷

Thus human cognition remains both discursive and finite, not creative. Nevertheless, what Fichte calls intellectual intuition is self-actualizing, like the divine mode of cognition that Kant calls intellectual intuition. Positing myself as self-positing *constitutes* me as an agent who is able to posit.⁹⁸ Positing myself as self-legislating *constitutes* me as an agent who is practically free to be autonomous or heteronomous.

In Fichte's view, neither sensory intuition nor intellectual intuition ordinarily occurs on its own, as a fact of consciousness, although both can become facts of consciousness for the philosopher:

Like sensory intuition, which never occurs by itself or constitutes a complete state of consciousness, this intellectual intuition never occurs alone, however, as a complete act of consciousness. Both types of intuition must also be grasped by means of concepts, or "comprehended." Nor is this all. In addition, intellectual intuition is always conjoined with some *sensory* intuition. I cannot discover myself to be acting without also discovering some object upon which I act; and I discover this object by means of sensory intuition, which I grasp by means of a concept . . .

If, however, it must be conceded that there is no immediate, isolated consciousness of intellectual intuition, then where does the philosopher obtain his acquaintance with intellectual intuition and his isolated rep-

97. Fichte (1964-), VDWL, I/4: 227.

98. See Neuhouser (1990), 77-78. Ameriks (2000a), 250, 254-255, finds this to be a mysterious claim that conflates epistemic and metaphysical issues, and he observes that it commits Fichte to the view that, either the I ceases to exist during deep sleep or intellectual intuition continues during deep sleep. Again, Ameriks's unsympathetic reading depends on the assumption that Fichte cannot allow the possibility of representations without consciousness.

resentation of the same? I answer this question as follows: He undoubtedly obtains this in the same way he obtains his acquaintance with and his isolated representation of sensory intuition: namely, by means of an inference from the obvious facts of consciousness . . .

Hence the philosopher discovers this intellectual intuition as a fact of consciousness. (It is a fact [*Tatsache*] for him; for the original I it is an act [*Tathandlung*]. He does not, however, discover it immediately, as an isolated fact within his consciousness, but only insofar as he introduces distinctions into what is present as a unity within ordinary consciousness and thereby dissolves this whole into its components.⁹⁹

Thus the transcendental philosopher, undertaking to account for the *a priori* possibility of ordinary experience, departs from ordinary experience by distinguishing within her own experience what is not ordinarily distinguished. At first, this is a matter of inference: there must *a priori* be certain conditions, or else experience could not be possible. But it becomes a matter not merely of inference but of consciousness. By forming concepts adequate for the comprehension of these conditions, she becomes capable of new and peculiarly philosophical states of consciousness in which she ascribes these conditions to herself. In these states, that which is ordinarily an act that enables consciousness and that is unavailable as a fact of consciousness, becomes a fact of consciousness. In the same way, a meaning is ordinarily that by which a word refers to its object and is ordinarily not the topic of discussion. But the practitioner of semantics makes the meaning into the topic of discussion and must frame new and appropriate concepts and words.

When the transcendental philosopher adequately conceptualizes intellectual intuition, she acquires transcendental self-knowledge. This is not knowledge of the self as a *thing* in itself. For a thing in itself would be an entity that is available for the passive intuition of some possible being, and that is what it is in virtue of its intrinsic properties. As a Holistic Monist, Fichte must deny that the I is a thing in itself. For the I cognizes itself in action, hence as an I, not as a self, while there can be no room for intrinsic properties once Holistic Monism is taken to have defeated Monadic Individualism. Rather, transcendental self-knowledge is the I's knowledge of the I *in itself*. That is to say, it is knowledge acquired, not from a partial

99. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 217–219.

standpoint within the totality, but from the standpoint of the absolute principle that renders the whole an unconditioned whole, or a totality.¹⁰⁰

5.6

What, then, is the relationship between these two intellectual intuitions? What role do they play in Fichte's systematic program?

One view—recently defended by Karl Ameriks and Frederick Beiser—is that the intellectual intuition of freedom through consciousness of the moral law provides the *starting point* for Fichte's transcendental account, which is therefore ineliminably moralistic. As Ameriks puts it, this commits Fichte to a radical, methodological primacy of the practical, which should be distinguished from a still stronger global primacy:

It should be noted that what is meant here by the methodological primacy of pure practical reason, that is, the "radical" primacy of the practical, does not entail having to go so far as to claim a fully "global" primacy of the practical, since it need not require distinctively practical considerations to be an internal part of all substantive assertions. All that the claim of methodological practical primacy asserts is that to get to the first step of properly asserting any nontrivial existential assertions, one has to rely on at least one premise that is irreducibly moral and has no significant precondition in prior "neutral" ontological investigations.¹⁰¹

As this passage makes clear, Ameriks's view is that Fichte accords methodological primacy not to the practical in general but specifically to the *moral*. However, unlike some earlier proponents of this reading—notably Josiah Royce¹⁰²—Ameriks thinks that moral primacy (as I shall call it from

100. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 190: "The object of idealism is precisely this I in itself." In a footnote, Fichte remarks, "I have hitherto avoided this expression in order not to occasion any representation of an I as a thing in itself. My concern was in vain; consequently, I will now employ this expression, because I do not see whom I have to spare."

101. Ameriks (2000a), 193. Cf. Beiser (2002), 219–220, 233: "In ascribing primacy to practical reason in this sense, Fichte made the principles of morality nothing less than a transcendental condition of the possibility of experience itself. This means that we can assume that there is an external world—the fundamental presupposition of our experience—only as a condition for moral action."

102. See Royce (1919).

now on) is characteristic of Fichte's views from approximately 1797 but not those of his earlier works.

In this developmental claim, Ameriks follows Federick Neuhouser, who divides Fichte's development (before his Berlin period) into three stages: (1) a presystematic stage, in which Fichte explores the possibility of a theoretical first principle, the "formal unity of consciousness," but abandons the attempt to formulate a principle expressing the unconditionality of the I; (2) the first presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in works published in 1794, primarily the *Foundations*, in which Fichte's conception of the unconditionality of the I equivocates between a theoretical and a practical or moral meaning in a way that is fatal to his attempt to prove the practicality of pure reason on the basis of a principle that is universally recognized; and (3) the second presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in 1797–1799, in which the first principle now expresses an unequivocally practical commitment to autonomy.¹⁰³

In Ameriks's view, it is hard to understand why Fichte characterizes *both* consciousness of the moral law *and* pure self-consciousness as involving intellectual intuition. Thus Ameriks says that Fichte "unfortunately" follows clear assertions of moral primacy with what seem to be nonmoral claims about consciousness, thus "complicating matters" and "generating a mistaken impression."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Ameriks finds the clearest expression of Fichte's moral primacy in *The Vocation of Man*, in which Fichte argues directly from consciousness of the moral law to antiskeptical claims.¹⁰⁵

103. See Neuhouser (2000), 32–65. Beiser does not discuss Neuhouser's view and seems to find more continuity in Fichte's thinking. But Neuhouser sees Fichte as committed to the primacy of the practical in the relevant sense already in 1794, and to some extent in works from 1791 on. See Beiser (2002), 228–239.

104. See Ameriks (2000a), 179, 199–201.

105. See Ameriks (2000a), 173–174, 183, 194–196, 212, 230. In his Preface Fichte explicitly states that BM is intended to be useful outside the schools and is not addressed to professional philosophers. This is not a reason to dismiss it, but it is a reason not to take it as a maximally adequate formulation of Fichte's position. In particular, BM retains the distinction between theoretical and practical concerns whose overcoming he regards as one of his principal achievements. But BM prepares the way for the overcoming of the distinction in professional philosophy, for those who are so inclined. As I read it, the central question of BM, raised in Part I, is how to reconcile the thoroughgoing ontic determinacy and causal determination of the world-system, which seems to have nihilistic implications, with my immediate awareness of myself as acting freely. In Part II, a theoretical interpretation of this immediacy fails to provide the desired reconciliation. For, if I consider myself to be claiming theoretical knowledge, then I cannot resist the demand for justification, which leads to an infinite regress that no knowledge-claim can stop. In Part III, however, the regress is stopped through a practical interpretation of the immediacy of my

It seems impossible to reconcile this interpretation with Fichte's rejection of regressive transcendental arguments from facts of consciousness, which he expresses as early as 1793 and which he continues to emphasize not only in his methodological reflections but also in his polemical writings. If the interpretation summarized above is correct, then Fichte simply is giving a regressive argument from the fact of moral consciousness, and the difference between Fichte and Schmid lies not in methodology but only in Fichte's emphasis on morality. So, although this is not the place to give a full account of Fichte's development, I need to say enough about his development to show where and why I disagree with Ameriks, Beiser, and Neuhouser.

Although I agree with Neuhouser that there are some significant differences—differences that are not only presentational but also substantive—between the 1794–1795 version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and the 1796–1799 version,¹⁰⁶ I disagree with his and Ameriks's characterizations of those differences.

In the first place, I think that we should take seriously Fichte's own account of his development:

The first presentation was made somewhat awkward by the fact that the discussion of the conditions for the possibility of the principles did not present these conditions in their natural order, but was instead divided into a "theoretical" and a "practical" part. As a result of this division, many directly related issues were separated too widely from one another. This will no longer occur in the present version, [which will follow] a method of presentation that is just the opposite of that followed by the author in his compendium of 1794, where he proceeded from the theoretical portion of philosophy (i.e., from what had to be explained) to the practical

self-awareness as a free agent, which is now understood as the immediacy of an act in which I acknowledge the contents of my mental states as reason-giving. Fichte emphasizes the connection between the freedom expressed in this act and my freedom to acknowledge the moral law as supremely normative. This emphasis makes sense, given his popular intention. Indeed, the act of acknowledging the moral law is the highest instance of the activity of acknowledging the content of my mental state as reason-giving. In a less popular exposition, Fichte could have also emphasized that it follows from his account that every act responsive to reason—even to a *theoretical* reason, or reason-for-belief—involves a practical moment. In his systematic works he develops not only that idea but also the idea that every act responsive to reason—even to a *practical* reason, or reason-for-action—involves a theoretical moment. This would be out of place in BM, but is not inconsistent with anything said there.

106. I regard GNR (1796) as the first published expression of Fichte's second presentation.

part (i.e., to what was meant to serve as the *basis* for explaining the former). In the present lectures, however, the hitherto familiar division between theoretical and practical philosophy is not to be found. Instead, these lectures present philosophy as a *whole*, in the exposition of which theoretical and practical philosophy are united. The presentation follows a much more natural path, beginning with the practical sphere, or, whenever it would contribute to the clarity of the exposition to do so, inserting the practical into the theoretical, in order to explain the latter in terms of the former: a liberty for which the author was not yet sufficiently self-confident at the time that he published his *Wissenschaftslehre*.¹⁰⁷

107. Fichte (1964–), WLn, IV/2: 16–17. The issues raised in this passage are complicated by the fact that, while I think that the lecture transcripts provide the key to the interpretation of the published works of 1796–1799, Ameriks (2000a) finds reasons to “bracket discussion” of the lecture transcripts, while Beiser (2002) finds reason to treat them “chiefly as a supplement to the published works.” Indeed, Martin chooses to disregard them altogether. Martin (1998), 6–7, gives four reasons: (1) unlike the 1794–1795 GWL, Fichte never published a work based on the lectures; (2) the lectures were never directly known to anyone except the students attending them; (3) the *Foundations* are adequate for an understanding of Fichte’s views on the relationship between theory and practice, and on dialectical methodology; finally, (4) the lecture transcripts suggest only strategic, not doctrinal developments. Ameriks presumably rejects (3) and (4), since he follows Neu-houser’s account of Fichte’s development. But he affirms both (1) and (2). See Ameriks, 202n.14. Beiser, 221, gives two reasons of his own: (5) the transcripts, even if accurate, tell us only what Fichte was thinking during two semesters; and (6) there is no comparison between the transcripts and the published works “in terms of providing sustained, detailed, and rigorous technical argument.”

I will respond to these points in turn. (1) Fichte intended to publish his VDWL and succeeded in publishing two introductions plus the first chapter before his attention was distracted by the atheism controversy. So the fact that he did not complete publication should not be taken to suggest that the “new method” developed in the lectures was merely a momentary and undeveloped commitment. Indeed, it is not difficult to show that the published works of 1796–1799 presuppose the foundations laid in the lectures. For example, each repeats a major claim made in the lectures, which is possible only through the overcoming of the theoretical/practical distinction. See Fichte (1964–), WLn, IV/2: 241: “The ‘ought,’ or the categorical imperative, is also a theoretical principle.” Cf. Fichte (1964–), I/5: 77. See Franks (2000b). (2) Besides the fact that Fichte’s lectures were famously well-attended and, indeed, attended by some significant and well-connected figures during this time, if I am right about the connection between the lectures and the published works from 1796 to 1799, then some of the basic ideas from the “new method” were widely known. Mainly through GNR they were, for example, very significant for Hegel. With respect to (3) and (4), the complexity of the issues demands a lengthier treatment than is possible here. It will have to suffice to say that, on the one hand, the major claim mentioned above is not to be found in the 1794–1795 GWL, which strongly suggests that no principle is both theoretical and practical, and that no theoretical principle is constitutive, while the “new method” enables Fichte to argue that his first principle is both theoretical and practical, and hence constitutive both theoretically—in its transcendental employment—and practically—in its normative employment.

Fichte states here that, in his second presentation, he dispenses with the traditional distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy. This means not only that he begins with the practical—a claim to which I will return shortly—but also that he “inserts the practical into the theoretical.” As becomes clear in the 1796–1799 texts, Fichte thinks that the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy is an abstract, reflective version of an important distinction between *ideal* and *real* activity. Real activity is “true activity, which is an instance of acting,” whereas ideal activity is “activity in a state of repose,” “an image or copy” of the object to which real activity directs itself.¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, there can be no ideal activity without real activity and no real activity without ideal activity. Thus, intellectual intuition of both the kinds discussed above involves both moments or aspects. On the other hand, ideal activity is the ground of real activity. This reflects Fichte’s commitment to Holistic Monism: real activity is the first principle, which grounds ideal activity, but real activity is an immanent, not a transcendent principle, and could not exist without its derivatives. Fichte sometimes expresses his thesis by saying that the practical is the ground or foundation of the theoretical. But this should not be understood in a way that would allow the ground to exist without what it grounds. Unfortunately, Fichte’s first presentation encourages this misunderstanding by observing the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy, and thus by suggesting that there can be theoretical cognition that is in no way practical, and practical cognition that is no way theoretical. Neuhouser and Ameriks ignore what Fichte takes to be significant about

On the other hand, given the dialectical method of the 1794–1795 GWL and the repeated reinterpretations of the first principle, it would be hard to dismiss the claim that Fichte always intended to reach such a conclusion through some further dialectical reinterpretation. (5) It is to some extent true that any text of Fichte’s shows us only what he was thinking at the time of composition. But Fichte gave these lectures in both 1796 and 1799, apparently with few changes, during which time he intended to work them up into a published version, an intention that he partially carried out and did not give up until 1801. So the transcripts reflect, at least in its main gist, if not in every detail, what Fichte thought for the bulk of his years at Jena. (6) To be sure, the lecture transcripts differ from the ideal version that Fichte would have liked to publish. But I do not find the argument of the transcripts to be much less sustained, rigorous, and detailed than the published works of the period, especially if it is read in conjunction with those works. Indeed, I find that it compares favorably with the argument of the 1794–1795 GWL, which represents nothing more than the handouts for Fichte’s first attempt at university teaching. Of course, this issue can only be resolved by detailed interpretation, which I will offer elsewhere.

108. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 44.

his development. They consequently fall into the trap of thinking that Fichte is committed to a practical first principle that is *really distinct* from its theoretical derivatives.

When Fichte begins his new presentation by emphasizing the intellectual intuition involved in every act of consciousness—such as, famously, thinking of a wall—he means, then, to emphasize the real aspect of all such acts. He accordingly chooses an example that is not distinctively practical, let alone moral. I do not think that Fichte's discussion of nonmoral intellectual intuition is "unfortunate" or confusing. Rather, it is essential for his program, which is to show that there is a real first principle that is both immanent within and foundational for every act of consciousness.

What, then, does Fichte mean in those passages where he emphasizes that consciousness of the moral law involves intellectual intuition in an exemplary fashion, and where he expresses what Ameriks takes to be moral primacy? To answer this question, we need to distinguish between (1) the starting point of the transcendental philosopher, or the taking up of the transcendental standpoint, which is the precondition for transcendental philosophy, (2) the starting point of transcendental philosophy, which is the absolute first principle, and (3) the culmination of transcendental philosophy, which is the ultimate derivative of the first principle. Failure to make these distinctions has led to confusion. In my view, consciousness of the moral law serves, in Fichte's second presentation, as (1) and (3) *but not as* (2).

The relationship between (1) the precondition or taking up of the standpoint of transcendental philosophy and (2) the first principle of transcendental philosophy is equivalent to the relationship between the *Factum* of reason and the actuality of freedom in Kant's second *Critique*. In other words, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of real activity, while real activity is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law. At the same time, there is a circle in which each entails the other. To show that real activity is indeed actual and not merely a necessity of our thinking, which might be deluded, Fichte must show that, from the first principle or *ratio essendi*, follow not only the formal conditions of theoretical and practical cognition, but also the determinate applicability of those conditions to sensibly given objects. Thus his system culminates in a demonstration of the determinate applicability of the highest form. In other words, the system can be considered complete only when it deduces the possibility of consciousness of the moral law as a derivative of real activity—that is, only when the system demon-

strates the possibility of its own precondition, hence when it demonstrates its own possibility.

More needs to be said about the precondition and about the culmination of the system. First, how does consciousness of the moral law enable the transcendental philosopher to arrive at the first principle? There seem to be two possibilities. The first is that one cannot understand that every act of consciousness involves intellectual intuition, and one cannot discern real activity, unless one has first acknowledged the supreme normative force of the moral law, and hence the actuality of one's own practical freedom.¹⁰⁹ The second is that, although one can understand that every act of consciousness involves intellectual intuition, and one can discern real activity, without first acknowledging the supreme normative force of the moral law and the actuality of one's own freedom, what one cannot do without satisfying this precondition is acknowledge real activity as *the absolute first principle of philosophy*.

The first option seems implausible. Fichte does not seem explicitly committed to it and, if my previous account of intellectual intuition is correct, then understanding or affirming the thesis that every act of consciousness involves intellectual intuition does not seem to depend in any way on prior realization of one's practical freedom.

The second option, however, is plausible. It is also, I think, what Fichte has in mind when he says, for example:

Intellectual intuition provides the only firm standpoint for any philosophy. . . . I cannot be driven from this position. This is the point where my philosophy becomes entirely independent of all arbitrary choice and becomes a product of iron necessity—to the extent, that is, that free reason can be subject to necessity: i.e., it becomes a product of *practical* necessity. I *cannot* go beyond this standpoint, because I am not *permitted* to go beyond it. With this, transcendental idealism simultaneously reveals itself to be the only type of philosophical thinking that accords with duty. It is the mode of thinking in which speculation and the ethical law are most intimately united. I *ought* to begin my thinking with the thought of the pure I, and I ought to think of this pure I as absolutely self-active—not as determined by things, but rather as determining them.¹¹⁰

109. See Perrinjaquet (1994), 83–86.

110. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 219–220. The term *firm standpoint* alludes to the Archimedean request, “*δοῦ μοι που στῶ*” (“Give me a place to stand”), which is the epigram of both Jacobi's Spinoza book and Reinhold's treatise on the need for a fundamental principle of all phi-

Here Fichte is applying his version of the Kantian thesis that commitment to the moral law involves aiming at the highest good as a goal, not to the moral life, but to *philosophy*. The thought is that one cannot acknowledge the supreme normative force of the moral law without at the same time aiming at a condition in which an absolute first principle grounds all other principles, thereby grounding all valid forms of grounding in a way that escapes the Agrippan trilemma. Within the moral life, this means that one should aim at what Fichte calls "a moral world order."¹¹¹ Within philosophy, it means that one should aim at the completion of the German idealist system. In other words, an autonomous agent who engages in philosophy should aim at the completion of the system and should believe this goal to be not only possible, but "possible through me."¹¹² Only such a person is able to see not only that there must be an absolute first principle on whose basis systematization is possible, but also that this principle can only be real activity, the practical moment in every act of consciousness.

In this light, we can understand a passage in which Fichte discusses a difference between Kant and himself. As he says, even if Kant's pure self-consciousness is understood as Fichtean intellectual intuition, it remains possible to object that, according to Kant, "all consciousness is merely conditioned by self-consciousness," but may be grounded "in something or other outside of consciousness," as long as this "something or other" does not "contradict the conditions of self-consciousness." But, according to Fichte, "all consciousness is determined by self-consciousness; i.e., everything that occurs within consciousness has its foundation in the conditions that make self-consciousness possible." What accounts for this undoubted difference between Kant and Fichte?

I must show that in our case the *determinacy* follows from the *conditionality*, and thus that the distinction in question is not present in this case and makes no difference at all. If a person says "All consciousness is conditioned by the possibility of self-consciousness *and from now on I wish*

losophy. In his response to Schlosser, Kant describes freedom as the true Archimedean point. See Kant (1900–), VpT, 8: 403.

111. Fichte uses the same language in describing the goal of systematization and the goal of the moral world order. See Fichte (1964–), ÜGG, I/5: 352: "There is no firm standpoint except the one just indicated, and it is based not upon logic, but upon one's moral disposition or sentiment; and so long as our argument either fails to progress to this point or else proceeds beyond it, we remain upon a boundless ocean where every wave is propelled forward by yet another. . . . Here one does not infer actuality from possibility, but just the reverse: not 'I ought because I can,' but rather, 'I can because I ought.'"

112. Fichte (1964–), ÜGG, I/5: 353.

to view it in just this manner," then, as he proceeds in his investigation of consciousness, he will never know anything more about consciousness than this, and he will abstract from everything else he may otherwise believe that he knows about consciousness. He will derive everything required from the postulated principle, and only the consciousness he has derived in this manner will count for him as consciousness at all. Everything else is and remains nothing whatsoever.¹¹³

This odd passage seems to argue that what is clearly a difference is not really a difference, on the grounds of a wish that it is not! But what is going on here, I suggest, becomes clear once one realizes that, by "in our case," Fichte must mean "in the case of those who philosophize from the standpoint of moral autonomy." "We" undertake, out of the motivation of the moral law, to find the absolute first principle from which every *a priori* necessary condition of the possibility of experience may be derived, and to carry out the derivation. So when "we" say that what Kant calls pure self-consciousness is the spontaneous and ubiquitous condition for the possibility of consciousness, "we" might equally say that it is the determining ground of consciousness. For "we" are interested in this spontaneous and ubiquitous—that is, absolute and universal—condition only because "we" take an interest in systematicity. It is only in this manner that "we" wish to regard consciousness, for "our" wills are directed to the goal of systematicity by the moral law.

Still, that pure self-consciousness, intellectual intuition, or real activity is the absolute first principle has not been demonstrated until the system is complete, until it culminates, not merely in the derivation of the moral law as the highest form, but in the derivation of this form as a normative principle capable of determinate applicability to sensible objects and, indeed, as really efficacious within the empirical world. Until this has been achieved, Fichte's system is vulnerable to Maimon's version of the Actuality Problem. For the possibility has not been excluded that the system traces nothing but the formal necessity of our own thinking and that the circle formed by the moral law and freedom is a massive self-delusion.

There is much confusion in the literature about the relationship between the absolute first principle and the normative principles that Fichte seeks to derive therefrom, including the principle of right and the moral law. Fichte himself is partly to blame for some misleading formulations. However, those formulations can be understood on the basis of transcripts from

113. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 230.

the 1796/1799 lectures, which reveal some central features of the second—largely unpublished—presentation.

This confusion is most apparent in discussions of the *Foundations of Natural Right*. In the second and third theorems of this work, Fichte seems to argue that the normative principle of right is a transcendental condition for the possibility of finite rationality or individuality. Then, in the rest of the work, Fichte apparently seeks to derive, from this normative principle, substantive norms whose implementations characterize any social and political arrangement that is to count as just. The project sounds exciting. What could be a more compelling deduction of a normative principle than a demonstration that every finite rational being is governed by that principle as a transcendently necessary condition? On the other hand, the claim seems implausibly strong and hence unlikely to have been proven. Commentators commonly criticize Fichte for equivocating at some crucial point and hence failing to keep his promise.¹¹⁴ But there is a textual puzzle. For Fichte himself seems later to *reject* the thought that a normative principle is at the same time a transcendental condition. Indeed, he seems to deny *exactly* what he argued for earlier, when he says, for example, that “rational, sensible beings and their sensible world do not first come to be through the concept of right.”¹¹⁵ What is going on?

The solution to the puzzle, I believe, lies in the lecture transcripts. There the new method is said to undertake two equally necessary movements: first an *ascent* and then a *descent*.¹¹⁶ In its ascent, the new method seeks to adequately formulate a first principle in accordance with a Spinozist conception of systematicity. As I have said, the principle is real activity. But Fichte takes himself to have found an adequate expression for this principle only in section 13, when he arrives at what he calls “the pure will.”¹¹⁷ On the one hand, Fichte says that “the pure will is the categorical imperative.”¹¹⁸ On the other hand, he says that “one should not yet think here of the categorical imperative.”¹¹⁹ What he means by this last statement is that,

114. See, for example, Siep (1979), 35–36. Neuhausser in Fichte (1998), xvii–xix, claims that Fichte modifies his position in section 7 and again in the opening remark of the First Appendix.

115. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 95.

116. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 131–132, 157.

117. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 135. Cf. 167–168.

118. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 144.

119. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 114. Cf. 134: “This mere form of willing, this absolute demand, is not yet the ethical law. It first assumes an ethical character only when it is related to

as a transcendental condition, the pure will is entirely indeterminate, an abstraction introduced solely for the sake of systematic explanation. Thus, as Fichte readily concedes to Maimon, the pure will—the highest point to which the new method ascends—is to this extent a *qualitas occulta*.¹²⁰

In its descent, the new method gradually concretizes its abstractions by showing that transcendental structures are instantiated within everyday consciousness. The first such concretization is the reciprocally recognitive summons, in which both the pure will and individuality achieve their initial expressions within the empirical world. In his account of the summons, Fichte's immediate goal is to explain how the origination of individuality is possible *without invoking intrinsic properties*, hence to show that Holistic Monism does not lead to nihilism. The basic idea—first worked out in the *Foundations of Natural Right* but also central to the lecture transcripts—is that I first achieve immediate self-consciousness when I recognize that someone is summoning me to action, hence recognizing me as an agent: "As surely as this X (which can be comprehended either as determinability or as the summons) is comprehended at all, one acts freely. Even my resistance [to acting freely] is an expression of my freedom. Here I necessarily discover myself to be something determinable, something that has to act. . . . As surely as I comprehend the summons, I first discover myself as subject with the predicate of 'freedom that is to be discovered.'" ¹²¹ Two moments are distinguishable here. First, there is the *unavoidability* of responding to the summons by acting freely. This is the moment of pure will or *Wille*, which unconditionally wills willing.¹²² Second, there is the free choice whereby I myself determine to respond to the summons in some determinate way: by doing what the other wants, by resisting what the

a free choice within the sensible world, and we are not yet concerned with this." See also 136–137: "Here again, one must think of the pure will and of the categorical demand of the same in a quite indeterminate fashion; i.e., one must not yet think of a categorical imperative. For we are not yet in the realm of morality; but rather, as is well known, we are at present trying to explain all consciousness as such and in its entirety."

120. Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 135.

121. Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 180–181.

122. See Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 181–182: "'I discover myself': what does this mean? . . . How can we show [that] absolute, immediate [consciousness is] the first point of consciousness? ([With this question, we are finished with our consideration of the material or content of consciousness, for what is absolutely immediate within consciousness is the pure will.] We are now dealing only with the formal aspect of the latter, [i.e., with the question, How do we become aware of the pure will?])"

other wants, or even by ignoring the other. This is the moment of individuality or *Willkür*.¹²³

But this descent is only the *beginning* of an adequate response to Maimon's worry that transcendental philosophy is merely formal, not real. Consequently, Fichte's so-called applied Jena works—the *Foundations of Natural Right* and the *System of Ethics*—take on particular importance for the completion of his foundational project. For it is in the applied works that certain structures—derived in the foundational account as transcendental conditions for the possibility of finite rationality—become structures of voluntarily assumed, action-guiding ends. Thus the reciprocally recognitive structure of the summons becomes the structure of the voluntarily assumed end of individuality: the concept of right in the normative sense. Someone who elects to live within society adopts the end of individuality as such—in herself and in others—and thereby commits herself both to rightful or just action and to the achievement of a just society. Similarly, the unconditionally self-willing structure of the pure will becomes the structure of the voluntarily assumed end of moral autonomy: the moral law. Someone who acknowledges the moral law as supremely normative adopts as an end the unconditionally free willing of unconditional free will itself, thereby committing herself both to autonomous action and to the achievement of the highest good. If this transformation of transcendental conditions in normative principles succeeds, then the reality of transcendental philosophy will have been deduced. For transcendental conditions—or, rather, normative principles exhibiting the same structures as transcendental conditions—will have been shown to determine everyday practices of judgment and to be available to everyday consciousness. They will no longer be vulnerable to the charge of being occult qualities, introduced solely for the sake of explanation, out of the exigency of our—perhaps deluded—thinking.

The upshot of all this is that Fichte himself distinguishes between transcendental conditions and normative principles. But he claims that there is an *isomorphism* between the transcendental and the normative. Consequently, he uses the same terms for both, although this can be misleading. The transcendental conditions provide the *a priori* grounds of the normative principles, while the normative principles show that the transcendental

123. Fichte (1964–), WLnM, IV/2: 179: "Individuality is given to me precisely through this summons: individuality = the summons to act freely."

conditions are not merely occult qualities; hence, although transcendental explanation appeals to abstractions, it is not therefore pseudo-explanation.

Returning to the textual puzzle of the *Foundations of Natural Right*, we can now see that Fichte uses the term *concept (or relation) of right* in two ways, transcendently and normatively.¹²⁴ He uses the same term because he wants to show that a transcendental condition for the possibility of finite rationality is isomorphic with a normative principle. But this should not mislead us into thinking that the transcendental condition is itself normative. Reciprocal recognition, as it is deduced in sections 3 and 4 of the *Foundations of Natural Right*, has no normative import whatsoever. There is no action that it forbids. For, as Fichte emphasizes in the lectures, *anything* one does in response to the summons of another becomes a moment of reciprocal recognition. Whether you act or refrain from acting, you acknowledge the other who acknowledges you.¹²⁵ Indeed, even if you respond violently—even if you “treat the other as a thing”—you are still responding. So you still acknowledge the other as having summoned you, hence as a finite rational being who is *not* a thing. In the summons, the pure will expresses itself as a demand for responsiveness, a demand that cannot be evaded.¹²⁶ But an inescapable demand is not a norm. For norms can be transgressed. Only when individuality is taken as an explicit end—only when a community of individuals is voluntarily entered into—does reciprocal recognition become the structure of a normative principle.

Similarly, it is only in the *System of Ethics*, when pure will is shown to be taken as an explicit end by autonomous individuals, that the system can succeed in explaining the possibility of its own precondition, hence of its own possibility. The idea that Fichte is committed to moral primacy arises in part from the confusion between the moral law as *ratio cognoscendi* and real activity as the *ratio essendi* or absolute first principle of the system, and partly from the understandable but nonetheless mistaken interpretation of the pure will in its transcendental sense as the pure will in its normative sense.

124. Alas, Fichte is not as explicit about his double usage as he is in the case of “pure will,” but the same reasons apply in both cases.

125. Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 177.

126. This comes out in Fichte (1964–), GNR, I/3: 358, when Fichte draws the conclusion that “I must in all cases recognize the free being outside me as a free being, i.e., I must limit my freedom through the concept of the possibility of his freedom.” For here Fichte uses the language of *müssen*, not of *sollen*. It is not a question of an obligation that I can fail to fulfil.

5.7

Now that we have seen how the *Factum* of reason can be the pre-condition of the German idealist system, as the taking up of the transcendental standpoint, we can also understand the claim that a German idealist system is a "philosophy of postulates," and the emphasis on the special kind of obscurity that pertains to the system.

The fragment known as the *Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism*, variously attributed to Hegel, Schelling, or Hölderlin, begins as follows: "... an ethics. Since the whole of metaphysics will in the future fall under the *moral* (of which Kant, with both his practical postulates has given only an *example*, has *exhausted* nothing), therefore this ethics becomes nothing other than a complete system of all ideas or, what is the same, of all practical postulates."¹²⁷

Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel all share the idea that the German idealist system should be a system of all the postulates, whose model is Kant's derivation, from the *Factum* of reason and the actuality of freedom, of the postulates of God's existence and the immortality of the soul. Thus, in the central section 13 of his 1796/1799 lectures, Fichte remarks: "Moreover, the scope of Kant's practical postulate is too narrow, for he limits it entirely to belief in God and immortality; but we will see that consciousness in its entirety is included within this postulate."¹²⁸ To construct this system of postulates, Fichte adds, is tantamount to revising the first *Critique* on the basis of the second and third, which would have required "enormous effort" from Kant himself, and so was never done.

In Schelling's *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, one of Kant's principal contributions is said to be the development of a "method of practical postulates" that is employable by *both* dogmatism *and* criticism.¹²⁹ Thus Spinoza gave the title *Ethics* to the optimal version of dogmatism, and thus the optimal version of criticism must also take the form of a derivation, from an absolute first principle, of postulates capable of playing a determinative role within an individual life.

Meanwhile, in his early correspondence with Schelling, Hegel declares

127. Hegel (1970), SPDI, I: 234.

128. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 139. See also Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 264–265, where "the philosophy of the postulates" is said to consist of two parts: the theory of right, in which theory addresses a postulate to practice, and the philosophy of religion, in which practice addresses a postulate to nature.

129. Schelling (1856–1865), PBDK, I/1, 303–304.

that, if only he had time, he would try to show how, once moral faith has been established, the legitimate idea of God may now be employed "retrospectively" in order to export the notion of end-directedness from ethico-theology to physico-theology.¹³⁰ In other words, Hegel wants to derive, from the idea of the *ens realissimum* known through the *Factum* of reason, postulates pertaining to nature. In another letter, Hegel says that he once considered writing an article about how to satisfy "the postulate that practical reason governs the world of appearances, and the other postulates."¹³¹

In conjunction with their discussion of the German idealist system as involving postulation, both Fichte and Schelling try to explain the peculiar obscurity of the system. Thus Fichte points out that it follows from the fact that the first principle is a postulate "that if one wants to communicate this philosophy to someone else, one has to ask the other person to perform the action in question." But since this action can be performed in the requisite way only by someone who has already attained consciousness of the moral law, it follows that not every one will be in a position to perform the action and hence to have the *Wissenschaftslehre* communicated to him. Similarly, when explaining that he always intended the first principle to be understood as a postulate, Schelling says:

Philosophy itself is only an idea whose realization the philosopher can expect alone from practical reason. Therefore, philosophy must remain incomprehensible and even ridiculous as long as the student remains incapable of rising to ideas and also fails to learn from Kant that ideas are objects not of idle speculation but of free action, that the entire realm of ideas has reality only for the moral activity of man, and that man may not find any further *objects* where he himself begins to create and to make real. No wonder, then, that in the hands of a man who wants to determine ideas theoretically anything that goes beyond the table of categories, and especially the idea of the absolute, is the same to him as some story of No-one at all. And at the spot where others first feel really free, he is confronted with a big void which he does not know how to fill, and which leaves him with no consciousness other than that of his own vacancy of mind—proof only that his mind has never learned to act freely nor to reflect on itself, and that he can maintain his own place among minds only by means of a mechanical kind of thinking.¹³²

130. Hegel to Schelling, end of January 1795, in Hegel (1953), Briefe I, Letter 8.

131. Hegel to Schelling, 30 August 1795, in Hegel (1953), Briefe I, Letter 14.

132. Schelling (1856–1861), VIIP, I/1: 243.

A few lines earlier, Schelling has declared his own indifference to "a universally valid philosophy, a philosophy of which only a wiseacre should boast who, like Lessing's windmill, lives in friendship with all 32 winds."

This brings me back to a point argued in Chapter 4: Reinhold wanted both universal validity and universal acknowledgment, but criticism of his systematic ambiguity shows that a German idealist system cannot have both. Schelling chooses to give up both. In his *Letters*, he explains that, properly understood, the primacy of the practical means that "no man can convince himself of any system except *practically*, that is, by realizing either system [of dogmatism or criticism] *in himself*. Consequently, I believe that I can also explain why, for a spirit who has made himself free and who owes *his* philosophy only to himself, nothing can be more unbearable than the despotism of narrow minds who cannot tolerate another system beside their own."¹³³ Thus Spinoza realizes the system of dogmatism by striving to annihilate free causality in himself, while the German idealist realizes the system of criticism by striving to annihilate objective causality in the external world.¹³⁴ In other words, philosophical systems are realized by living one's nihilism, which is directed towards either the subject or the object. This is why there is no such thing as the one universally valid system, and also why

either of the two absolutely opposed systems, dogmatism and criticism, is just as possible as the other, and both will co-exist as long as finite beings do not all stand on the same level of freedom . . .

Which of the two we choose depends on the freedom of spirit which we have ourselves acquired. We must *be* what we call ourselves theoretically. And nothing can convince us of being that, except our very *striving* to be that. This striving brings to pass our knowledge of ourselves, and thus this knowledge becomes the pure product of our freedom. We ourselves must have worked our way up to the point from which we want to start. Man cannot get there by arguing, nor can others argue him up to that point.¹³⁵

Neither Fichte nor Schelling intends, I think, to make what Ameriks calls the "bad Fichtean suggestion" that the compelling power of a theoretical proof is incompatible with freedom—an argument that confuses

133. Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1: 306.

134. Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1: 315–316, 334.

135. Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1: 308.

rational and physical compulsion.¹³⁶ What they mean rather is that there is a precondition for engaging in the German idealist programme—namely, the philosopher's recognition of his own autonomy, which alone enables him to take up a properly transcendental standpoint from which to philosophize. But this precondition can be satisfied only through a transformation in one's self-understanding, which cannot be the effect of a theoretical proof. As Schelling explains in his appendix on postulates, Socrates could demonstrate a geometrical theorem even to a slave because, unlike philosophical construction, geometrical construction does not involve an understanding of one's own autonomy.¹³⁷

In their responses to this situation, however, Fichte and Schelling part company. Schelling gives up the claim to universal validity, but Fichte never does. Already in 1793–1794, however, while first working out his conception of the system, he worries about the possibility that the first principle will fail to win universal acknowledgment. But he is already prepared to find the ground for the failure in the uncomprehending: "Neither by us, nor by anyone whosoever, is [the first principle] to be proven by means of something else. Whoever has it not, is spoilt [*verdorben*] for philosophy."¹³⁸ In 1794, he is already sure that:

The majority of men could sooner be brought to believe themselves a piece of lava in the moon than to take themselves for an I. Hence they have never understood Kant, or grasped his spirit; hence, too, they will not understand this exposition, though the condition for all philosophizing lies at its head. Anyone who is not yet at one with himself on this point has no understanding of any fundamental philosophy, and needs none. Nature, whose machine he is, will lead him, even without his own cooperation, into all the occupations that are his to pursue. Philosophizing calls for independence, and this one can only confer on oneself.¹³⁹

Yet Fichte maintains that this failure of universal acknowledgment does not impugn the system's claim to universal validity. In 1797, he explains why:

We have not maintained that there exists any sort of original and innate difference between human beings which makes some people capable of

136. Ameriks (2000a), 207–208.

137. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIWL, I/1: 445.

138. Fichte (1964–), EM, II/ 3: 144.

139. Fichte (1964–), GWL, I/2: 326n.

thinking of or of learning something that others, because of their very nature, are simply unable to think. Reason is the common possession of everyone and is entirely the same in every rational being. The same talent possessed by any one rational being is also possessed by every other rational being. Indeed, as we have often stated, and as we have repeated in the present treatise, the concepts with which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is concerned are concepts that are actually operative in every rational being, where they operate with the necessity of reason; for the very possibility of any consciousness whatsoever is based upon the efficacy of these same concepts.¹⁴⁰

The situation of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, as characterized here by Fichte, is exactly that of Kant's moral philosophy, as characterized in Kant's response to Schlosser. There Kant explains, as we have seen, that practical freedom is the "true secret" of philosophy, for I can deduce the freedom of my *Willkür* only through acknowledging the autonomy of *Wille*, but my *Willkür* is just as free *not* to acknowledge the autonomy of *Wille* as it is free to acknowledge it. I am free to be heteronomous, even to be evil. Although it is more rational to be autonomous—for only autonomy constitutes an escape from the Agrippan trilemma—heteronomy—acting for practical reasons vulnerable to the trilemma—involves no straightforward intellectual error or irrationality that could be demonstrated through some theoretical proof. Of course, the major difference between Fichte and Kant in this respect is that Fichte is extending to the transcendental standpoint required for philosophy as a whole what Kant thinks true of the standpoint required for practical philosophy alone.

Does this mean that Fichte must regard those who fail to acknowledge the universal validity of the system, those who fail to understand him, as heteronomous, even immoral? He can sometimes suggest as much, for example, when he describes them in the above passage as mere machines of nature. However, he gradually develops an account of the stages of *Bildung* to which there corresponds an account of the preconditions for transcendental philosophy, not all of which are under the individual's control and not all of which are moral. In short, the precondition of transcendental philosophy—the *Factum* of reason—has its own preconditions. On this view, only a few survive the destructive effects of an education system designed to reduce the individual to a mere fragment of a human being,

140. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 258.

fit for a society dominated by the division of labor. Thus only a few are able to actualize their freedom in the way the *Factum* of reason requires. Only when there is a new education system—indeed, a new society—can there be a generation capable of acknowledging the universal validity of the system.

This explains, I think, Fichte's notorious polemical tone in passages such as these:

... my philosophy is ... nothing for Professor Schmid, on account of incapacity—just as his philosophy is nothing for me, on account of understanding. He is unable to enter the realm which I embrace; he cannot even put a foot across its border.

Where I am, he never is. We do not have a single point in common, on the basis of which we might be able to reach a mutual understanding. ... Whatever the *Wissenschaftslehre* may be in itself, it is at least not up to Professor Schmid to judge it, since it lies in a world which does not exist for him at all—for he lacks the sense through which it becomes present to one. If it is a painting which is supposed to be evaluated, one listens to the opinion of people that can see. However bad a painting may be, I do not think that it should be criticized by people who are blind from birth.

I am firmly convinced that Professor Schmid will never acquire this sense (though one might hope that a young person who lacks it might be able to acquire it).¹⁴¹

I write only for readers who continue to harbor an inner sense for the certainty or the dubitability, the clarity or the confusion, of their own cognition. I write for readers for whom science and conviction still retain some meaning and who are themselves driven by a lively zeal to seek the same. I wish to have nothing to do with those who, as a result of protracted spiritual servitude, have lost their own selves and, along with this loss of themselves, have lost any feeling for their own conviction, as well as any belief in the conviction of others. To those for whom it is simply folly for anyone to seek truth on his own, for those who see in the sciences nothing but a comfortable livelihood, who shrink from any extension of the same, as from a new job, and for whom no means is shameful so long as it is employed in order to silence the person who disrupts their business as usual: to them I have nothing to say.

I would be sorry if I were understood by people of this sort. To date,

141. Fichte (1964–), VS, I/3: 265.

this wish has been fulfilled so far as they are concerned; and I hope that, in the present case as well, these prefatory remarks will so confuse them that, from now on, they will be unable to see anything beyond the mere letters, inasmuch as what passes for spirit in their case will be yanked back and forth by the secret fury pent up within them.¹⁴²

This fantasy of annihilating one's uncomprehending colleagues makes hard reading. The mutual incomprehension of philosophers may sometimes give one occasion to entertain such fantasies. But should we want to hold onto such thoughts, even to publish them? What is really going on here, I think, is not that Fichte wants to annihilate his colleagues. Rather, he thinks—in accordance with the Jacobian problematic of nihilism—that many of them have *already* been annihilated. What he wishes is that these unfortunate creatures should wear their annihilation on their sleeves and find appropriate employment, instead of occupying chairs of philosophy.¹⁴³

Moreover, among the preconditions for taking up the transcendental standpoint is to be found, not only recognition of the normative supremacy of the moral law, hence of my duty and ability to recreate the world in accordance with morality, but also aesthetic taste. Indeed, aesthetic cultivation is crucial for taking up the transcendental standpoint:

The ideal philosopher contemplates the real human being. But the philosopher is, after all, only a human being as well, and, as such, he too occupies only the real viewpoint. How then is he able to elevate himself to the transcendental viewpoint? . . . If no middle term exists, then—according to our own first principles—there is no means to make the transition from the one to the other. It has now been demonstrated, however, that a transcendental philosophy does exist. From this it follows that these two viewpoints must not be absolutely opposed to each other; instead, they must also be united with each other through some middle term. [Consequently,] there does exist such an intermediary between the transcendental perspective and the ordinary one. This midpoint is aesthetics. From the ordinary point of view, the world appears as something given; from the transcendental point of view, it appears to be something produced (entirely within me). From the aesthetic point of view, the world appears to be given to us just as if we had produced it and to be just the sort of world we would have produced.¹⁴⁴

142. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 185.

143. See the end of the *Crystal Clear Report*, Fichte (1964–), SB, I/7: 266–267.

144. Fichte (1964), WLn, IV/2: 265–266.

I take this to mean that art is the production not of artificial objects but of *artificial worlds*. Morality requires us to strive to remake the world in its image, as a totality grounded in an absolute; art involves the construction of artificial worlds; only if one has achieved both stages of cultivation is one prepared for the standpoint of transcendental philosophy, which involves the artificial reconstruction of the world as the totality it must be, despite appearances, since consciousness of the moral law is a *Factum*.

Although Fichte does not explicitly discuss the case, it should be possible, then, that some of those who do not acknowledge the universal validity of the system are autonomous but lack aesthetic cultivation. Such philosophers—perhaps Fichte should call them Kantians?—understand what the moral law demands of them in practical terms, but they do not understand what it demands of them philosophically, for they do not appreciate the possibility of artificial world-construction. They should be able to grasp the ideas that consciousness of the moral law and pure self-consciousness are intellectual intuitions in Fichte's sense. What they cannot grasp is the possibility of constructing a system in which the former is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the latter's role as *ratio essendi*.

5.8

The results of this chapter are best understood in relation to those of Chapters 1 and 2.

In Chapter 1, I argued that there is a Kantian model for the deductive program of German idealism: the deduction, from the idea of the *ens realissimum*, of the categories, first as transcendental realities composing the *omnitudo realitatis*, within which every grounding terminates absolutely, then as empirical realities, with respect to which no grounding escapes the Agrippan trilemma. Chapter 2 showed why German idealists rethink this model, substituting Holistic Monism for the Monadic Individualism espoused by Kant. Since Kant's commitment compels him to distinguish sharply between the intrinsic properties that can alone constitute transcendental realities for him and the irreducibly relational properties that can alone constitute empirical realities, he must also distinguish the *omnitudo realitatis* or intelligible world from the empirical world, which cannot in principle be understood as a totality. But the German idealists regard all realities as irreducibly relational. So theirs is not a Two Existents or Two

Essences but rather a Two Aspects view. Relational realities may be viewed from two standpoints: either from the empirical standpoint, a partial perspective located within the whole, or from the transcendental standpoint, the perspective from which alone the whole can be seen as a totality, with an absolute first principle.

In this chapter, I have undertaken to explain what is involved in taking up the transcendental standpoint by introducing a further Kantian model: the Deduction of Freedom through the *Factum* of reason. The idea is that, by self-consciously acknowledging the normative supremacy of pure reason, I make available for explicit philosophizing an understanding of myself as free that has previously been available only implicitly for practical deliberation and action. In so doing, I demonstrate the actuality of an absolute first principle that, from the Holistic Monist point of view, cannot express the voice of a transcendent divinity but can only be the immanent principle of the *omnitude realitatis*. Now the deduction of the categories may proceed not from the mere—albeit necessary—*idea* of the *ens realissimum* but from the *actuality* of the *ens realissimum*.¹⁴⁵ Since the categorical forms are derived as necessary conditions for the actuality of the first principle, as Kant's postulates are derived as necessary presuppositions for the actuality of the moral law, the German idealist system may be regarded as a philosophy of the postulates.

In the *Factum* of reason, I take up a standpoint that is both familiar and universally accessible in everyday life, yet extremely unfamiliar in philosophy. It is a standpoint, moreover, that is peculiarly open to repudiation. For human freedom is the freedom either to be autonomous or to be heteronomous.

Of course, heteronomy does not present itself as heteronomy, let alone as irrationality. It presents itself as a seductive rationality that expresses my empirical self. As soon as I see that I have a *choice* between heteronomy and autonomy, between a grounding vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma and a grounding invulnerable to it, the choice is, as they say, a no-brainer.

145. Again it is worth comparing with Proops (2003), who argues for a connection in Kant's texts between the deductive role of the *Factum* of reason and the Metaphysical Deduction. See also Ameriks (2003), 256–257, who compares the deduction involving the *Factum* to the Metaphysical Expositions in the Transcendental Aesthetic and to the Metaphysical Deduction, insofar as all the above are supposed to show that the origin of some specific representation can only be *a priori*.

The difficulty lies in seeing that heteronomy is heteronomy and that I have a choice *at all*. If the very possibility of autonomy can be obscure to me in everyday life, then it can certainly be obscure to me in philosophy, where the idea of taking up the standpoint of freedom is so unaccustomed. Thus the esoteric character of Kant's Deduction of Freedom and derivation of the postulates extends to the entire German idealist program. Indeed, there are even more stumbling blocks before the German idealist system. Not only is the *Factum* of reason a precondition for what German idealists regard as transcendental philosophy, but there are also *additional* preconditions that I must satisfy before I am in a position to see that the *Factum* of reason is a pre-condition for participating in the German idealist program. On the basis of this understanding of the esoteric character of German idealism, it should be possible to explain the linguistic peculiarities of German idealist texts, insofar as they arise from the exigencies of the program—such as Fichte's use of nominalized verbs to express acts, performed and characterized from the transcendental standpoint, not the products of those acts, regarded from the empirical standpoint.¹⁴⁶

I have focused heavily in this chapter on Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* and, by extension, on Schelling's early works, in which he understands himself to be participating in the same project as Fichte. The justification for this focus is that it is here, I believe, that the significance of Kant's Deduction of Freedom can first be appreciated. It may seem that what I have said about the role of the *Factum* of reason within the German idealist program can only be pertinent to *this* stage in the development of German idealism. But I do not think that the relevance of the *Factum* is limited in this way. In the next chapter, I will address the worry that the account given in this book is irrelevant to German idealism after 1800.

In closing this chapter, however, I want to observe that Fichte's use of the *Factum* of reason is only *one* possible use, one that adheres closely to the Kantian thought that the principle acknowledged in the *Factum* is the moral law. Formulated more generally, the *Factum* of reason is the acknowledgment of the supreme normativity of pure reason in *whatever form one takes to be appropriate*. If one takes the best expression of pure reason's normativity to be, not Kantian morality, but rather the beauty of nature or, say, the sublimity of divine love, then one will have a different view from

146. See, for example, Fichte (1964–), APS, I/6: 373–374.

Fichte's of the transcendental standpoint that is the precondition for the German idealist program, of the absolute first principle with which the system begins, and of the self-consciousness with which it culminates and closes the circle. But the underlying model will continue to be Kant's Deduction of Freedom in the second *Critique*.

Intuition, Negation, and the Possibility of Evil

God, as an infinite representational power, thinks from all eternity of all possible beings, i.e. He thinks Himself limited in all possible ways. He does not think discursively like us, but rather His thoughts are at the same time presentations. If one objects that we have no concept of such a manner of thinking, then I answer: we certainly have a concept of it, since we possess it in part. All concepts of mathematics are thought by us, and at the same time presented as real objects through construction *a priori*. Thus we are in this respect similar to God.

—Maimon (2000a), Str., 4:42

The *Wissenschaftslehre* is *mathesis*—not only with regard to its external form, but also with regard to its content. It describes a continuous series of intuitions and it establishes all its propositions within intuition. It is the *mathesis* of reason itself. Just as geometry comprises the entire system of our ways of limiting space, so this system comprises within itself the system of reason as a whole.

—Fichte (1964—) Ankündigung, 1/7:160

The difficult requirement of intellectual intuition has aroused general complaint, and we have sometimes heard tell of people who went mad in their efforts to produce the pure act of will and the intellectual intuition. Both the complaint and the madness were no doubt occasioned by the name of the thing, not by the thing itself, which Fichte describes as simple and ordinary enough, the only difficulty being perhaps to convince oneself that it really is just this simple and ordinary.

—Hegel (1970), 6W, 2:398

6.1

In the previous five chapters, I have developed a skeletal account of the German idealist program, which, I claim, is fleshed out in different ways by the three major idealists after Reinhold: Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. I

have focused on what, I claim, unifies the work of these three, and I have drawn on resources developed in the 1780s and 1790s.

Yet there are significant developments in the thinking of each of these figures, as well as fateful disagreements between them, especially after 1800. There are the differences not only between Fichte's first and second Jena presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre* during the 1790s, but also between the Jena presentations and the versions developed in Berlin after 1800. There is the schism between Schelling and Hegel on the one hand, and Fichte on the other, in 1800–1801. There is Hegel's criticism of Schelling and of his own earlier version of absolute idealism in 1804–1807, and—last but not least—there is Schelling's later criticism of Hegel, which is rightly seen as foundational for much of the post-Hegelian tradition of Continental philosophy. Can my account accommodate these differences? Or does it lose its relevance when these differences, especially the developments after 1800, are considered?

It goes—almost but not quite—without saying that each of these demands far more extensive treatment than I can give them here. My limited purpose here, however, is to respond to the worry that these developments and differences are *incompatible* with the account I have developed of the problems and methods of German idealism. I will argue both that the differences are compatible with my account, and that my account promises to help illuminate them.¹

6.2

In more than one difference between versions of German idealism, a central role is played by a distinction between two methods. They are the methods of *construction in intellectual, transcendental or speculative intuition*, and *dialectic or determinate negation*, in which the negation of a presupposition shared by the members of some set of relevant alternatives generates a new presupposition that resolves the tensions exhibited by the members of the set.

Fichte initially considers the constructive method but then develops the

1. I do not mean to suggest, however, that my account alone would suffice for the characterization of all these differences, without appeal to any other resources, perhaps to resources brought into play after 1800, such as, for example, the theosophical traditions with which Schelling engages, and Hegel's innovations in logic and the philosophy of history.

dialectical in his first Jena presentation, returning decisively to the constructive method in his second Jena presentation. Schelling and Hegel transform the constructive method by applying it within *Naturphilosophie*. Then Hegel becomes critical of the constructive method and turns to dialectic, of which he becomes the exemplary practitioner, while Schelling develops a criticism of the German idealist program itself, a criticism directed especially against Hegelian dialectic.

This is a rough sketch, but it is sufficient to raise the question of the relationship between the two methods. Are they fundamentally opposed? Or are they competing conceptualizations of what remains, if not a single method then, at any rate, a family of methods with fundamental affinities?

To begin to answer this question, it is helpful to consider how Fichte could have developed both methods at approximately the same time, in 1793–1796. He is not, I believe, engaged in a violent oscillation between two fundamentally opposed methods. Instead, construction in intellectual intuition and dialectic can be seen as distinct conceptualizations of a relatively unified set of methodological ideas. The unity becomes apparent when these texts are read in light of the characterization of the German idealist project as a progressive metaphysical deduction from the idea of an *ens realissimum*, understood in Holistic Monist fashion as the immanent principle of the totality of real possibilities. If we can understand the underlying unity of Fichte's first and second Jena presentations—without, of course, denying the significant differences between them—then we may also be able to understand the underlying unity between the German idealist program of the 1790s and its descendants after 1800.

To see that there is a unity underlying the dialectical and constructive conceptions of idealist method, we need to recall the connection in Kant's thought between space and the sum-total of all reality. In the *Dissertation*, Kant calls space "the phenomenal omnipresence" of God. The idea that space is a derivative expression of the *omnitudo realitatis* available for divine cognition is still present in the following sentence from the first *Critique*: "All manifoldness of things is only so many ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, just as all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space."² For Kant, however, there is also an important difference here. Spatial and, more generally, empirical objects are what they are solely in virtue of relational

2. Kant (1900–), KrV, A578/B606. See 35, 91 above.

properties. But transcendently real things are what they are in virtue of intrinsic properties. So spatial and empirical objects are what they are in virtue of the objects they are not, and in virtue of their relations to those objects they are not. But transcendently real things are what they are in virtue of what they positively are. However, as finite things, the intrinsic properties of transcendently real things are limited versions of the absolutely infinite intrinsic properties of God. So, although it is true that all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space, it is not true that all things are possible only as different ways of limiting the *omnitudo realitatis* because the position of each thing within the *omnitudo realitatis* may be positively characterized. However, all things are possible only as limitations of the absolutely infinite realities of the *ens realissimum*, which are the objects of God's intellectual self-intuition.

But all this assumes Monadic Individualism. If Holistic Monism is assumed instead, then the analogy between spatial figures and possible things becomes closer. For now there are no intrinsic properties and the determination of all things involves negation. So it is true that all possible things are only so many limitations of the *omnitudo realitatis*, just as all possible spatial figures are only so many limitations of space.

The upshot is that, even for Kant, construction in intuition is *determination by negation*. One describes a space and then limits that space in a way that picks out just one of infinitely many figures. But Kant does not think that ontology involves determination by negation because things in themselves are individuated by positive determinations, which are limitations of divine originals. For German idealists, however, it is not only geometric construction but also transcendental ontology that involves determination by negation. What God cognizes when He cognizes Himself by intellectual intuition are the fundamental forms of ontologically determinative negation. So the idea of intellectual intuition and the idea of determinate negation are both attempts to conceptualize the same thing: the relationship between the *ens realissimum* or absolute first principle, and the fundamental forms or categories in virtue of which all possible entities may be determined and individuated.

Still, if we were limited to texts published in Fichte's lifetime, his development of these methodological ideas would be quite confusing. In his 1794 review of *Aenesidemus*, Fichte makes some assertions about intellectual intuition that will be central to later developments of his system, as we saw in Chapter 5:

The absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is, instead, posited by intellectual intuition.³

The mind . . . is a transcendental Idea which is distinguished from all other transcendental ideas by the fact that it is realized through intellectual intuition, through the *I am*, and indeed, through the *I simply am*, because *I am*.⁴

If, in intellectual intuition, the I is *because* it is and is *what* it is, then it is, to that extent, *self-positing*, absolutely independent and autonomous.⁵

Here the "I" is said to be posited in intellectual intuition. In the second passage, this claim seems to have implications for theoretical cognition, since it concerns the existence of the I, which is surely a necessary condition for the possibility of any cognition whatsoever. In the third passage, the claim seems to have implications for practical freedom, since it is somehow connected to absolute independence—presumably, practical freedom—and autonomy. But these claims are merely asserted, without argument or explanation.

In the 1794–1795 *Foundations*, the first presentation of the fundamental ideas of Fichte's system, there is no mention of intellectual intuition whatsoever. Instead, "I am" is said to express a *Tathandlung*, as Fichte had claimed for the absolute first principle in the *Aenesidemus* review. The argument is a variant of what, thanks to Hegel, will come to be called *dialectic*: thesis and antithesis form an antinomy, which is resolved through synthesis, which gives rise to another antinomy, and so on.⁶ Meanwhile, it is in Schelling's writings from this period that the notion of intellectual intuition is employed.

In the 1797–1798 *Introductions* to a new presentation of Fichte's system, however, intellectual intuition is prominent once again. It is said to be the only firm standpoint for philosophy, and Kant is said to have implicitly described intellectual intuition in his accounts of consciousness of the moral law and pure consciousness. By 1800–1801, Fichte is insisting that

3. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 48.

4. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 57.

5. Fichte (1964–), RA, I/2: 65.

6. However, it is a common mistake, popularized by Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus, to view the thesis—antithesis—synthesis structure of Fichte's early method as a feature of every instance of dialectic, including Hegel's. See Mueller (1958).

philosophy, properly practiced, is rational cognition by means of intuition, as is mathematics. Indeed, philosophy is the mathesis of mathesis.

The gaps in the development of Fichte's methodology may be filled in with the help of posthumously published texts: the *Private Meditations* of 1793–1794, published in 1971; Lavater's transcript of the Zürich lectures of 1794, published in 1996; and two student transcripts of the 1796 and 1799 Jena lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*, published in 1937 and 1982.⁷

The idea that we humans possess a capacity for intellectual intuition which may be employed in philosophy is already present—like so many other German idealist ideas—in Reinhold. For him, cognition of the pure forms of the cognitive and conative faculties is intellectual intuition.⁸ But it is Fichte, in his *Private Meditations*, who first explores the possibility of deploying the notion of intellectual intuition to defend the German idealist program against skeptical challenges: “Is not construction possible in the elementary philosophy: is it not possible to give an inner intuition that explains and proves thoughts. If that happens, then Aenesidemus would be refuted.”⁹ The idea comes from Fichte's reading of Maimon, who is mentioned in the same note. For Maimon had objected to Kant's generalization of the problem of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments, pointing out the difference between Kant's solution of the mathematical version of the problem, by means of construction in pure sensible intuition, and his solution of the empirical version of the problem, by means of categories like causality, that do not enable construction in intuition.¹⁰ Fichte's idea seems to be that a uniform solution might be available if there is not only mathematical construction in pure sensible intuition, but also categorial construction in intellectual intuition, which would be the cognition of the transcendently necessary forms of experience. If, instead of using a linear method of derivation from a principle presented as a premise, Reinhold had used the constructive method suggested by his use of the term *intellectual intuition*, Fichte seems to think here, he could have developed a system immune to the skeptical objections of Schulze, and even to the reformulated objections of Maimon himself.

7. See Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3: 3–181; ZV; WLnM.

8. See Stolzenberg (1986), 40–49.

9. Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3: 23–24n.

10. See, for example, Maimon (2000a), Strf, 4: 72–73.

In the *Meditations*, Fichte makes some exploratory attempts to develop a constructive method. But he soon abandons the attempt, as a letter written in January 1794 shows:

But isn't it true that philosophy, unlike geometry and mathematics, is quite unable to *construct* its concepts in *intuition*? Yes, this is quite true; it would be unfortunate if philosophy were able to do this, for then we would have no philosophy, but only mathematics. But philosophy can and should employ *thinking* in order to *deduce* its concepts from one single first principle which has to be granted by everyone. The form of deduction is the same as in mathematics, that is, it is the form prescribed by general logic.¹¹

It would seem that Fichte is right to abandon the idea of deriving the categories by construction in intellectual intuition. First, further reading in Maimon shows why he would not be sympathetic to the idea. For Maimon is in fact dissatisfied by mathematical proofs that depend on intuition. Geometrical constructions, he argues, show us that a synthetic *a priori* judgment is universally and necessarily true, hence that it is grounded in the form of our sensibility, but they cannot show us *how* it is grounded, for we do not know why our sensibility has the form it has. As Maimon puts it, construction in sensible intuition answers the *quaestio quid facti*, which Maimon takes to be the question of whether we have genuine knowledge. But it does not answer the *quaestio quid juris*, which Maimon takes to be the question of how our knowledge is grounded. Only a conceptualization of the proof—a liberation from intuition—could answer the *quaestio quid juris*.¹² Kant does not think that such a conceptualization will ever be possible, and he is prepared to accept the form of our sensibility as a fact whose bruteness reflects our finitude. But Maimon thinks that nothing less than conceptualization will do, and calls for mathematical developments that will in fact occur in the nineteenth century.

Second, even from Kant's point of view, the fact of construction in pure sensible intuition is also insufficient to answer the *quaestio quid juris* but for a different reason. For the fact of geometrical construction shows only that, through the form of our sensibility, we are able to constitute mathematical forms. It does not show that these forms are applicable to empirical objects, which Kant considers the sole objects of theoretical cognition—

11. Fichte (1964–), III/1: No. 175.

12. See, for example, Maimon (2000a), PhW, 3: 187–188.

let alone that these forms have *guaranteed* application to empirical objects, as they must if mathematical science and the natural science of mathematical physics are to be possible. As Manley Thompson helpfully puts the point: "Construction in pure intuition resembles intellectual intuition, which Kant characterizes in the Aesthetic as intuition that is 'self-activity' (B68); the difference that still defeats the rationalists' claim is that the constructions are not themselves existing objects."¹³ Thus, as Charles Parsons has emphasized, the cognitive status of geometrical construction stands in need of transcendental warrant, which it receives in the Transcendental Deduction.¹⁴ Turning the point around, a method of philosophical construction modeled on geometrical construction could not answer the *quaestio quid juris* raised by transcendental philosophy, for it could construct at most *mere forms of objects*, for whose guaranteed applicability to objects it could not on its own account. Maimon would certainly agree that the fact of mathematical construction, even if adequately conceptualized, could not answer the *quaestio quid juris* and, indeed, also the *quaestio quid facti* of mathematical physics. But he seems to think that this fact does suffice to show that there is mathematical cognition, presumably because, unlike Kant, he holds that mathematics is the science of mathematical objects, which are not mere forms.

The recently discovered transcript of Fichte's 1794 Zürich lectures shows that Fichte was aware of at least the first of these difficulties and that this was why he abandoned the constructive method in the 1794–1795 *Foundations*. Noting that, from the absence of construction in philosophy, "All skeptics, Maimon especially, have drawn implications against philosophy and its worth,"¹⁵ Fichte nevertheless argues for the distinctness of the two disciplines: "In geometry the act is *given* and the *product* is to be sought. In the *Wissenschaftslehre* the *product* is given, and the act, in virtue of which it exists, is to be sought. Geometry asks: *Quid facti*? The *Wissenschaftslehre*: *Quid juris*?"¹⁶ Here he shows himself to be aware of Maimon's view that geometric construction shows at most that there is mathematical cognition, hence that certain synthetic *a priori* judgments are grounded, but not how they are grounded, which is the central question of philosophy after Kant. Conse-

13. Thompson (1972), 339.

14. See Parsons (1983).

15. Fichte (1996), ZV, 119.

16. Fichte (1996), ZV, 139.

quently, the methods of geometry and philosophy are different: "The principle of all [geometrical] demonstration is as follows[:] because in consciousness a certain act is presumed, which is not in itself necessary, consciousness must be modified in a certain way, if it is to be *One*. In contrast, the principle of all [philosophical] deduction is as follows—because consciousness is *One*—a certain action must necessarily be presumed."¹⁷ In other words, geometry deals with hypothetical necessities that are grounded in but do not express the unity of consciousness: given an arbitrarily assumed starting point, such as the construction of a triangle, certain truths follow necessarily, such as the fact that the sum-total of the angles equals 180 degrees. In contrast, philosophy deals with absolute necessities that express the unity of consciousness: certain acts must occur in order for there to be consciousness at all.

It is important to note, however, that Fichte does not abandon the claim that we have intellectual intuition, and even that there is construction in intellectual intuition. For he also argues in the Zürich lectures that nothing in any special science can be without a ground in the foundational science or *Wissenschaftslehre*. Consequently, since there is pure sensible intuition and construction in intuition in mathematics, there must be intellectual intuition and construction in intuition in philosophy. Thus:

It will further be shown that the *I* is originally also an intuition, but not a sensible, rather an *intellectual* one.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* is thus initially in possession of pure intuition, just as much as geometry and all intuitions of geometry are grounded in the intuitions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

It will further be shown that, by the same token, the pure intuition of space is produced through the activity of imagination, not only freely, like geometrical intuitions, but rather with necessity, and thereby constructed, therefore that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is also in possession of a construction, which is however the only one.¹⁸

So the *I* is an intellectual intuition—we saw in Chapter 5 that this can be explained in terms of the capacity for unmediated self-ascription constitutive of agency—and space is constructed in intellectual intuition. But

17. Fichte (1996), ZV, 141–143.

18. Fichte (1996), ZV, 125.

there are no further constructions, so there are no infinitely iterable constructions of the geometrical sort.¹⁹

There is no reason to think that Fichte gives up this view when he writes the 1794–1795 *Foundations* where, for reasons that are now clear, he does use a method, not of construction in intuition, but rather of iterable antinomy resolution. This method also, it can be argued, has roots in Maimon, who—as we saw in Chapter 3—conceived transcendental philosophy as the unending attempt to resolve a “general antinomy of thought.” However, this method is also problematic. As we saw in the case of Kant’s Third Antinomy, an antinomy can show that none of a given set of apparently exhaustive alternatives is adequate, which on its own would be grounds for skepticism, and an antinomy can establish a requirement that any adequate alternative must meet, but it would seem that an antinomy cannot *produce* its own solution, or warrant any requirement-meeting suggestion as the *unique* solution. Thus Hartkopf argues that if Fichte employs antinomy in any way that is more than heuristic, then he commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent.²⁰ The fallacy could be represented as follows:

1. Antinomy *X* must be avoided.
2. If *I* and not-*I* stand in relationship *Q*, antinomy *X* is avoided.
3. Therefore *I* and not-*I* stand in relationship *Q*.

What this shows, however, is neither that Fichte’s method is no more than heuristic, nor that he has misunderstood the force of his own argumentation. It shows rather that his method is meant to employ *synthetic*, not only analytic necessity.

A synthetically necessary inference from an antinomy, or from the negation of a presupposition shared by both the thesis and the antithesis of an antinomy, is just what Hegel later calls determinate negation: a negation that does not merely amount to criticism of a presupposition but that generates a new presupposition immune to the old criticism, thus giving insight into the categorial structure of the totality of beings. Again, the underlying idea is that, given the Holistic Monist reconstrual of the Transcendental Ideal, all determination is negation, involving contrastive and relational rather than intrinsic properties. Consequently, a metaphysical

19. Friedman (1992a), 56–71, emphasizes the importance of infinitely iterable constructive procedures for the representation of space.

20. See Hartkopf (1967) and Martin (1997), 103–109.

deduction could begin from the idea of the *ens realissimum*, considered as immanent principle of the *omnitudo realitatis*, and derive from that idea those negations that constitute the highest or categorial determinations of every possible thing. However, the difficulty is that, even if all determination is negation, it does not follow that all negation is determination. What guarantees that the negations of *our* presuppositions will be just the negations enabling determination of the categories of every possible *being*? What is the ground for the synthetic necessity that negations of our presuppositions will be determinate in the sense of corresponding to categorial determinations of every possible being?

On the other hand, as Michael Friedman has argued, geometric construction is a kind of synthetically necessary inference.²¹ So it is not hard to understand why Fichte returns to the geometric model and hence to the idea of construction in intellectual intuition in 1796, in what he calls the *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*, or in accordance with a new method. As we have seen, he had not given up either the idea of intellectual intuition or the idea of construction in intellectual intuition. But he now needs to solve the two problems discussed above. First, he needs to arrive at a view on which there is *iterable* construction in intellectual intuition. Second, he needs to deal with Maimon's version of the Actuality Problem, by showing not only that the categorial forms constructed are uniquely necessary but also that they have determinate applications to empirical objects.

In Chapter 5, we saw how Fichte hopes to respond to the second problem: through the isomorphism of transcendental and normative principles. Insofar as transcendental principles such as pure will and reciprocal recognition can be shown to be isomorphic with normative principles of morality and justice, the determinate and effective role played by the latter within our lives shows that the former are not merely empty forms introduced, like occult qualities, solely for the sake of explanation.

But this still leaves us with the first problem: how could intellectual intuition be thought, in Fichte's second Jena presentation or "new method," to be *iterable* and thus to enable not only the construction of space but also

21. Friedman (1992a), 55–95. See 80–95 for the contrast between what Friedman calls the Russellian view that geometric construction is a form of synthetically necessary inference and the anti-Russellian view that pure intuition provides a model uniquely for Euclidean geometry and not for other possible sets of axioms. On this latter view, it is the availability of this model that renders the Euclidean axioms, and the theorems derived from them, synthetic, while the inferences through which the theorems are derived are analytic.

constructions analogous to those employed in geometric proof? The key is what Fichte calls "the principle of determinability,"²² "the law of reflective opposition,"²³ or "the law of reflection,"²⁴ which he formulates as follows: "it is only through opposition that it is possible to obtain a specific and clear consciousness of anything whatsoever."²⁵

Once again, we see Fichte inheriting Kant's Transcendental Ideal, through the transforming medium of Holistic Monism. For in the Ideal, Kant discusses the principle of determinability, which specifies that, for any pair of contradictory predicates, only one can apply to a single object.²⁶ He distinguishes this merely logical principle from the transcendental principle of thoroughgoing determination. This latter principle specifies that everything is thoroughly determined, which means that, for every pair of contradictory predicates, one and only one must apply to it. In other words, everything has a complete concept such that (1) the concept is composed of real predicates constituting a pre-given *omnitude realitatis*, and (2) for every possible question about whether a certain predicate from this totality applies to some particular thing, there is a determinate answer. Underlying Kant's discussion is the assumption of Monadic Individualism: the transcendental principle is concerned with transcendently real predicates that signify intrinsic properties. But Fichte's version of the principle assumes Holistic Monism: everything is what it is in virtue of its contrast with and relation to other things. In other words, determination is negation.

Now, Fichte's principle of determinability enables him to iterate acts of consciousness involving intellectual intuition in the following way. First, I engage in an arbitrary act of consciousness—say, by thinking of a wall. Then I explicitly and immediately ascribe this act to myself. I see that this explicit and immediate self-ascription is only possible if my first act involves not only the ideal act of thinking the wall but also a real act: an implicit and immediate self-reverting act or intellectual intuition. Now, by the principle of determinability, I find that I can think this real act only in contrast to a prior state of repose or ideal act, which I can think only in contrast to a real power, and so on. Fichte's underlying idea must be that

22. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 46.

23. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 35.

24. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 41.

25. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 31.

26. Kant (1900–), KrV, A571–2/B599–600. Maimon's version of the principle of determinability is central to his 1794 *Logik*. Fichte intended to review this work but never wrote the review.

the principle of determinability is not merely a principle requiring me to think in certain ways. It is a principle requiring me to immediately self-ascribe certain acts. Only thus can it enable the iterable acts required for a method of construction in intuition.

Unlike Euclidean constructions, however, Fichtean constructions are not infinitely iterable. It would be bad if they were, since the whole point is to avoid infinite regression and to arrive at an adequate expression of the absolute first principle that enables escape from the Agrippan trilemma!

This arrival occurs, as I explained in Chapter 5, in Section 13 of Fichte's lectures, and we can now understand better how it happens. Real activity turns out to be possible only on condition of conceiving a goal, which is possible only on condition of an ideal activity of cognizing an external object. But the ideal activity of cognizing an external object is in turn possible only on condition of the real activity of immediate self-ascription. So the system has coiled back on itself in a circle and "nothing is explained." However, the circle turns out not to be vicious because what it calls for is an act of consciousness that is at once both real and ideal, an act that is simultaneously conative and cognitive. This act is the summons, which is at once a self-determination to free activity and a cognition of an external object—namely, a cognition of another individual whom I recognize as summoning and hence as recognizing me. As discussed above, the summons has two moments, the pure will and individuality, such that pure will is fit to be the absolute ground of individuality, but not vice versa. At this point, Fichte changes direction from ascent to descent, presumably because he thinks that it would be impossible to immediately self-ascribe any act transcendently prior to the pure will.

There is much more to say about the details of Fichte's argument and about whether it is or could be made convincing. But here my point concerns his method alone and the way in which he works out the claim—first explored in 1793–1794, then abandoned, then taken up again—that transcendental philosophy may employ a method of construction in intellectual intuition. Both this method and the method of dialectic or determinate negation, I have argued, can be seen as conceptualizations of one program: the deduction of the categories, hence of the *a priori* possibility of experience, from the *ens realissimum*, which is the absolute ground disclosed in the *Factum* of reason.

Once we understand how one might think that the method proper to this program is *either* the method of construction in intuition *or* the method

of determinate negation, we may also understand the unity underlying two interpretations of the claim that the German idealist system is a philosophy of the postulates. On the first interpretation, the term *postulate* is understood with reference to its use in Kant's moral philosophy. On the second, it is understood with reference to its use in geometry.

Fichte and Schelling start using the term *postulate* in a geometrical sense in response to Jakob Sigismund Beck, who, in the third volume of his semiofficial exposition of Kant's critical philosophy, *The Standpoint from Which Critical Philosophy is to Be Judged*, which Fichte recommends as the best preparation for his own writings,²⁷ attacks the idea of a systematic derivation from an absolute first principle, declaring that an adequate system must begin with a postulate. In response to Beck's attacks, not only here but also in hostile reviews of their works—as well as to the hostility of Reinhold's former students in Jena to the project of derivation from an absolute first principle—Fichte and Schelling protest that they have been misunderstood and that their first principle was always intended as a postulate.²⁸

I believe that they are correct and that these protests are neither apologetics nor changes undertaken in response to criticism. But this may not

27. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 203n. See also Schelling (1856–1861), VIPP, I/1: 153n.

28. See Fichte (1964–), WLNm, IV/2: 28–29: "Prof. Beck also lashes out against the attempt to discover a first principle and contends instead that philosophy must begin with a *postulate*. But a postulate is also a starting point, which is not further proven, and thus it is a first principle. A first principle is any cognition that cannot be further proven. Thus anyone who states a postulate also states a first principle." Fichte goes on to say, however, that there is something at stake here, since it is appropriate to find fault with Reinhold's procedure, in which the first principle "states a fact . . . It is thus correct, after all, that philosophy must begin with a postulate, (but one that is grounded in an *act* [*Thathandlung*] and not in a *fact* [*Thatsache*]. (An 'act' is what occurs when I let my I act within itself and observe what happens. A 'fact,' in contrast, is present within consciousness as something already given or discovered, which can only be analyzed subsequently.)) The *Wissenschaftslehre* proceeds in this manner as well, and it employs the term 'act' to designate its postulate." See also Schelling (1856–1861), VIPP, I/1: 243: "The author believes that man was born to act, not to speculate, and that therefore his first step into philosophy must manifest the arrival of a free human being. Therefore he thought very little of written philosophy and even less of a speculative principle as a mainstay of the science. Still less does he think of a universally valid philosophy, a philosophy of which only a wiseacre should boast who, like Lessing's windmill, lives in friendship with all 32 winds. However, since the philosophical public seemed to have ears only for first principles, his own first principle in regard to his readers had to be a mere *postulate*. It demands the same free action as that with which, as he is convinced, all philosophizing must begin. The first postulate of all philosophy, to act freely, seemed to him as necessary as the first postulate of geometry, to draw a straight line. Just as little as the master of geometry proves the straight line should the philosopher try to prove freedom."

be readily apparent. For it is one thing to say that the categories derived from the first principle are postulates because they are necessary conditions for the actuality of freedom, as are the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, which Kant calls postulates. But it is quite another thing to say that the first principle itself is a postulate. How could this be what Fichte and Schelling have intended from the start?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Fichte's 1794 prospectus already says that "the first principle of geometry is the overall task of limiting space in accordanc  with a rule, or the task of spatial construction."²⁹ Here he is referring to the conjunction of (at least the first three of) Euclid's postulates, which specify infinitely iterable constructive operations that suffice for the description of a space: the drawing of a straight line from any point to any point, the continuous production of a finite straight line in a straight line, and the description of a circle with any center and radius.³⁰ In his 1794–1795 presentation, there is some analogy insofar as the first principle expresses an act—namely, the act of self-positing as self-positing—which involves an intellectual intuition that is the foundation of *inter alia* the act of describing a space or constructing in pure sensible intuition. In the 1796–1799 presentation, as we have seen, the analogy becomes more thoroughgoing. For thanks to the principle of determinability, intellectual intuition becomes the source of iterable constructive operations, analogues, and indeed grounds of Euclidean constructive operations.³¹ Perhaps it is because he has not yet worked out a way of iterating intellectual intuition that he does not yet use the term *postulate* in the 1794–1795 presentation. But he *could* have legitimately used the term then. In fact, we now know that he *did* use it in his *Private Meditations*.³²

In Schelling's case, the issue is more complicated. For he changes his usage of the term *postulate*. In the 1795 *Letters*, he sees Kant's contribution as the development of a "method of practical postulates" that is in principle neutral between dogmatism and criticism, as I have mentioned, and he attempts to develop a critical ethics of freedom that will serve as a coun-

29. Fichte (1964–),  BWL, I/2: 135. See 79 above.

30. See Kant (1900–), KrV, B154–155n.: "motion, as *description* of a space, is a pure act of the successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive imagination, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental philosophy." See also MAN, 4: 489.

31. See Fichte (1964–), WLnM, IV/2,  10a, for the derivation of the act of drawing a line in every possible direction, hence of space as a necessary condition for the possibility of experience.

32. Fichte (1964–), EM, II/3, 26.

terpart to Spinoza's dogmatic ethics of nihilism. To this end, he interprets Kant's postulates of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, not as theoretical assumptions "for the sake of moral progress and therefore in a merely practical *intention*," but rather as "the demand to realize practically the idea of God" and of immortality through infinite, moral striving.³³ This interpretation is part of Schelling's attempt to rework Kant's doctrine of the postulates in a way that is compatible, not with "the personal, individual being who reigns above in heaven" worshipped by the Tübingen theologians, Gottlieb Christian Storr and Friedrich Gottlieb Süßkind, but rather with the absolute I whom he takes to be the proper God of Fichtean Spinozists. However, in an appendix to his 1797–1798 *Treatise Explicatory of the Idealism in the Wissenschaftslehre*, on the topic of postulates in philosophy, Schelling now declares that God and immortality are not postulates at all, suggesting that many Kantians have been misled because they have read Kant on the postulates of practical reason but have not read Euclid.³⁴ In fact, he says: "The expression *postulate* is borrowed from mathematics. In geometry, the *most primordial* construction is not *demonstrated* but *postulated*. This *most primordial* (simplest) *construction* in space is the *extended point* or the *straight line*."³⁵

Although they specify acts, geometrical postulates are *theoretical*. That is to say, they specify acts of theoretical spontaneity which do not involve self-conscious exercises of *practical* freedom. In contrast, a philosophical postulate must be both theoretical and practical.³⁶ For a merely theoretical first principle would have to be an existential assertion, which could be the first principle only of a dogmatic system in which the goal is to know things as they are in themselves. A merely practical first principle would have to be an imperative—from which, presumably, no science could orig-

33. Schelling (1856–1861), PBDK, I/1: 333n.

34. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIW, I/1: 457. Kant (1900–), KpV, 5: 31, discusses the difference between geometrical postulates—which are problematic or hypothetically necessary practical propositions—and the categorical imperative, which is a categorical practical proposition. One could infer from this passage that it is not a problematic but a categorical postulate, but Kant rejects such a usage at KpV, 5: 132, where he says that the principle of morality "is not a postulate but a law." Postulates, he says, "are not theoretical dogmas but *presuppositions* in a necessarily practical respect." For the notion of a presupposition as a feature of the in itself that is necessary hypothetically, on the supposition of an intelligible world, see Chapter 2 above.

35. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIW, I/1: 444.

36. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIW, I/1: 446.

inate.³⁷ Consequently, it is appropriate to call the first principle of philosophy a postulate, since it calls for a science-founding act in response to what he calls "the primordial *ought*," which is presumably the moral law. But now it turns out that Kant's postulates of practical reason are misnamed:

Regarding the postulates of practical reason, I suppose that they will have played their role in philosophy for the longest time. A *postulate* is the requisite of a *primordial* (transcendental) construction. However, God and immortality are not *objects* of a *primordial* construction. In practical philosophy, there exist merely *precepts*. Insofar as their object is infinite and shall be realized in an *empirical* infinitude and under *empirical* conditions, these become *tasks*, indeed *infinite tasks*. To call them, therefore, postulates, is hardly any better than referring to infinite tasks in mathematics with that name.³⁸

This represents a shift in Schelling's thinking. But it does not represent a shift away from a commitment to the progressive derivation of *a priori* necessary conditions from the absolute first principle bound up with practical freedom. Schelling's point is that the demands to realize the ideas of God and immortality should be called tasks, not postulates. So his own earlier usage is confused because, in its designation of postulates, it stays too close to Kant's usage. But *Kant* understands these postulates to be theoretical in form but practical in content, not to signify infinite tasks. And Schelling's point is not that he is giving up the derivation of postulates in the sense of *a priori* necessary conditions of the absolute first principle. But it is in this period that he first begins to develop his views in *Naturphilosophie*, and he is now primarily interested in deriving transcendental conditions that constitute natural phenomena, not in deriving the normative principles with which he had previously been occupied. Although Schelling does not say so, these transcendental conditions, which are to be constructed in intuition, could appropriately be called postulates in accordance with the usage that he endorses in 1798.

To return to the main point, whatever differences there may be between Fichte's dialectical method of 1794–1795 and his constructive method of 1796–1799, and between Schelling's versions of the foundations of the

37. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIW, I/1: 447.

38. Schelling (1856–1861), AEIW, I/1: 451.

Wissenschaftslehre in the same period, there is an underlying unity. Fichte and Schelling may be regarded, at each of these stages, as attempting to deduce the categories from the *ens realissimum*, which is the *ratio essendi* disclosed in the *Factum* of reason, specifically in the acknowledgment of the moral law.

6.3

There can be no doubt, however, that Schelling's development of *Naturphilosophie* from 1798 either introduces or makes explicit some fundamental differences between Schelling's and Fichte's conceptions of the German idealist program. It takes Schelling until 1801 to attain what he himself takes to be clarity about these differences. By that time, Hegel's intervention on behalf of Schelling and against Fichte has helped to create what may be called a schism. Meanwhile, partly for internal reasons and partly because of the Atheism Controversy that leads to Fichte's unhappy departure from Jena, Fichte's own thinking undergoes significant developments expressed in the post-1800 Berlin versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which have yet to receive much attention in the Anglo-American literature. Is my account of the German idealist program still relevant to these dramatic shifts?

The proof, of course, is in the pudding. Here I can only specify some of the ingredients called for by the recipe.

I will start with the schism in which Fichte is accused of developing an idealism that is merely *subjective* and not genuinely *absolute*. What could this often repeated charge mean? Even the most developed versions of the accusation, in Hegel's earliest publications, tend merely to contrast Fichtean idealism with the idealism developed by Schelling, showing why the former might be called subjective and the latter objective, without explaining why it is bad for idealism to be subjective in the relevant sense and why Fichte cannot claim to develop a systematic account of genuinely absolute grounding. I will discuss four alternatives.³⁹

The first possibility is that Fichte is a subjective idealist in the sense that he thinks that the mind—perhaps, *his* mind—creates itself and everything else. In fact, neither Schelling nor Hegel makes this accusation against

39. Details of the emergence of this charge deserve discussion elsewhere. See Beiser (2002), 349–505.

Fichte. In 1801, in his first major publication, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, which first makes public and irreversible a schism between Fichte and Schelling that has, until now, been a subject of private correspondence, Hegel rejects this charge, when he criticizes Reinhold's understanding of Fichte:⁴⁰

Some of the forms in which Fichte has presented his system might mislead one into believing that it is a system of dogmatic idealism denying the opposite principle. Indeed, Reinhold overlooks the transcendental significance of the Fichtean principle which requires one to posit the difference of subject and object in $I = I$ at the same time as their identity. He regards Fichte's system as a system of absolute subjectivity, that is, a dogmatic idealism. But precisely what distinguishes Fichte's idealism is that the identity which it establishes is one that does not deny the objective but puts the subjective and the objective in the same rank of reality and certainty; and that pure and empirical consciousness are one. For the sake of the identity of subject and object I posit things outside myself just as surely as I posit myself. The things exist as certainly as I do.⁴¹

Continuing Fichte's criticism of Reinhold for inadequately grasping the transcendental standpoint in his initial version of the German idealist system, Hegel now argues that Reinhold has misunderstood Fichte's version as an *empirical* idealism. Thus Reinhold has failed to see that Fichte inherits Kant's Refutation of (empirical) Idealism, maintaining that there can be no pure self-consciousness without empirical consciousness, no self-positing without positing a world of empirically external objects. Hegel does not explicitly address the question of the I creating its objects. But there is a straightforward connection: what the mind creates is mental and does not exist outside the mind in an empirical sense; so, to interpret Fichte as holding the view that the I—whether absolute or individual—creates objects is to interpret him as an empirical idealist, which is the interpretation that Hegel here rejects.

Before turning to more plausible interpretations of the charge of subjective idealism, it is worth showing in some detail what is wrong with this version of the charge because it has been made by major figures in both the Anglo-American and Continental traditions, and because it continues

40. By 1801, Reinhold is no longer a Fichtean, and his new position is the overall target of Hegel's work.

41. Hegel (1970), DSP, 2: 62–63.

to be repeated, at least in the Anglo-American literature. Thus Bertrand Russell writes: "Kant's immediate successor, Fichte, abandoned 'things in themselves' and carried subjectivism to a point which seems almost to involve a kind of insanity. He holds that the Ego is the only ultimate reality, and that it exists because it posits itself; the non-Ego, which has a subordinate reality, also exists only because the Ego posits it. . . . The Ego as a metaphysical concept easily became confused with the empirical Fichte."⁴² Heidegger sometimes characterizes Fichte similarly.⁴³ Russell and Heidegger are neither the first nor the last to understand Fichte in this way. Here is an extract from an 1803 work by Jean Paul, in which the insane character Leibgeber comments on Fichte's philosophy:

"I astonish myself," said I, casting a cursory eye over my System, while my feet were being bathed, and looking significantly at my toes while their nails were being cut, "to think that I am the universe and the sum of all things. . . . Oh what a being, who creates all but himself (for it only *becomes* and never is). . . ."

At this point my feet refused to remain in the tub, and I paced up and down, barefoot and dripping: "Make thee a rough estimate," said I, "of thy creations—Space—Time (now well into the eighteenth century)—what is contained in those two—the worlds—what is within those—the three realms of Nature—the paltry realms of royalty—the realm of Truth—that of the Critical [i.e., the Kantian] school—and all the libraries!—And consequently the few volumes written by Fichte, because it will only be after I shall have posited or made him first that he will be able to dip his pen."⁴⁴

In this passage, positing is explicitly equated with creating or making. As Peter Heath and John Lachs remind us, it is of no small importance how

42. Russell (1945), 718.

43. Responding to the suggestion that his own philosophy has affinities with Fichte's, Heidegger, with some petulance, cites Schiller's remark in a letter to Goethe on 28 October, 1794: "According to Fichte's oral expression—for in his book there is not yet any mention of this—the ego is creative through its representations, too, and all reality is only in the ego. The world is for him only a ball which the ego has thrown and which it catches again in reflexion. Thus he would have truly declared his godhead as we were recently expecting." Apparently accepting this interpretation, Heidegger then remarks: "According to Fichte the ego throws forth the world, and according to *Being and Time* it is not the ego that first throws forth the world, but it is *Da-sein* (human being), presencing before all humanity, which is thrown." See Heidegger (1985), 187–188 and, for a view of modern philosophy as a development from Cartesianism to subjectivism, see Heidegger (1982), 96–138.

44. Jean Paul (1992), 227–228.

one understands Fichte's talk of positing or *setzen*: "At certain points . . . Fichte writes almost as if *setzen* and its compounds were the only verbs in the German language."⁴⁵ They go on to suggest that "by *setzen* Fichte refers to a nontemporal, causal activity that can be performed only by minds."⁴⁶ As it stands, this explanation is not terribly helpful because it leaves unspecified what sort of causal activity is intended. But Heath and Lachs later ascribe to Fichte the view that "through the creative power of reason whatever is posited is made real" and that "in [positing,] an undivided self is totally engaged in a single creative, all-encompassing enterprise."⁴⁷ Although they do not explicitly say that positing is creating, they strongly suggest it, as Lachs does elsewhere.⁴⁸ To be sure, Heath and Lachs do not think that the individual I is supposed to be creative. But the suggestion remains that Fichte is some sort of empirical idealist.

There seem to be three confusions underlying this misinterpretation of Fichte. The first is the assumption that Fichte uses the term *representation* in an empirical sense. Like Kant, Fichte both affirms empirical realism and draws our attention to the fact that transcendental philosophy sometimes uses terms in a sense that differs from the ordinary sense. So, when Fichte says that we are trapped in the circle of our own representation—as when Kant says similar things—he should not be interpreted unsympathetically as affirming empirical idealism, hence as contradicting himself.⁴⁹ The sympathetic interpretation is that when Fichte calls empirical objects "representations," he means that although we accord them reality—that is, status as grounds—within everyday reasoning, we should regard them as lacking reality and as needing to be grounded in an absolute ground that is not an

45. Peter Heath and John Lachs, "Preface," in Fichte (1982), xiii.

46. Heath and Lachs in Fichte (1982), xiv.

47. Heath and Lachs in Fichte (1982), xiv.

48. Elsewhere, Lachs (1972), 312–313, writes: "The German word 'setzen' is ordinarily translated as 'to set,' 'to place,' or 'to establish.' Its root significance is creative activity, an activity that can show itself in various modalities. It may be the simple physical act of placing an object in some location, the biological activity of bringing children into the world (*Kinder in die Welt zu setzen*), or the exceptionally complex socio-political action of raising some person to the throne (*auf den Thron setzen*). What we have in each case is practical activity that is productive or creative; it is always purposive and often voluntary." See also Quinton (2001), 80: "At a more abstract level he absorbed Fichte's idea that the mind is the creator of everything, giving rise to it by a kind of artistic self-expression. For Fichte this is a major dramatic event in which the 'I' (which is not, of course, you or me but the 'Absolute I') 'posits' the world. By 'posits' Fichte really means 'creates,' but it sounds like the much less audacious 'assumes the existence of.'"

49. See 156–160 above.

empirical object, within philosophical reasoning. Indeed, Fichte thinks that it is *only* if philosophy treats empirical objects as "representations" in this sense that the status of these objects as empirically real can be justified. For only then can there be an adequate response to skepticism and nihilism arising from the fact that everyday reasoning is subject to the Agrippan trilemma.

The second confusion is that, by "positing," Fichte means "creating." This is explicitly denied by Fichte himself: "We cannot absolutely 'think up' [*Erdenken*] anything, or create [*Erschaffen*] through thinking."⁵⁰ In roughly contemporaneous lectures, he tries to guard against the creativist misunderstanding of his thesis that "the *representing subject* is whatever it is only by means of *self-activity*." He says, "This proposition should not be taken to suggest any creation of representations."⁵¹

Fichte takes this term from metaphysical and logical tradition, as transmitted by Wolff and Kant. Thus Wolff formulates both the logical principle of *modus ponens* and the metaphysical Principle of Sufficient Reason in terms of positing: "*Si in syllogismo hypothetico antecedens ponitur, ponendum quoque est consequens.*"⁵² "*Nihil est sine ratio sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit, hoc est, si aliquid esse ponitur, ponendum etiam est aliquid, unde intelligitur, cur idem potius sit, quam non sit.*"⁵³ Kant criticized the ontological proof by arguing that it confused relative position or predication with absolute position or existential commitment:

The concept of *Position* or *setzen* is perfectly simple: it is identical with the concept of being in general. Now, something can be thought as posited merely relatively, or, to express the matter better, it can be thought merely as the relation (*respectus logicus*) of something as a characteristic mark of a thing. In this case, being, that is to say, the positing of this relation, is nothing other than the copula in a judgment. If what is considered is not merely this relation but the thing posited in and for itself, then this being is the same as existence.⁵⁴

50. Fichte (1964–), VDWL, I/4: 245. See 307–309 above.

51. Fichte (1964–), WLnM, IV/2: 24: "*kein erschaffen der Vorstellungen.*"

52. Wolff (1964–), *Philosophia Rationalis sive Logica*, §407: "If, in a hypothetical syllogism, the antecedent is posited, the consequent must also be posited."

53. Wolff (1964–), *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia*, §70: "nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is rather than not being, that is, if something is posited as being, then something is posited whereby it can be understood why the former is, rather than not being."

54. Kant (1900–), EMBD, 2: 73, 118.

Kant continued to use this terminology when describing Hume's challenge to reason, "to give him an account by what right she thinks that something could be so constituted that if it is posited, something else necessarily must thereby be posited as well, for that is what the concept cause says."⁵⁵ Since Fichte needed to construct a Holistic Monist system, and since he wanted to so in a way that avoided nihilism by demonstrating the possibility of individual freedom and autonomy, it makes sense that he would make much use of a maximally general term designating the mind's active relationship to its objects of judgment.

The third confusion—not committed by all who accuse Fichte of subjective idealism in this sense—is between what Fichte calls the pure or absolute I and the individual I. Like the first confusion, this depends on maintaining the empirical standpoint. From the transcendental standpoint, however, "The 'pure I' of the published *Wissenschaftslehre* [i.e., the 1794–1795 *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*] is to be understood as reason as such or in general, which something quite different from personal I-hood."⁵⁶ Fichte addresses this instance of the inability to assume the transcendental standpoint in characteristic style:

Our opponents continue to insist that they are unable to think of the concept they have been asked to think of, and we must take them at their word on this. To be sure, insofar as they are rational, spiritual beings, at all, they cannot simply dispense with the general concept of the pure I as such, for in that case they would have to refrain from making any objections against us—just as a block of wood would have to do. What they do lack, however, and are unable to elevate themselves to the level of, is *the concept of this concept*. They certainly possess this concept within themselves; they simply do not realize that they possess it. The reason for this incapacity does not lie in any particular weakness of their intellectual power, but rather in a weakness of their entire character. The final goal of their acting is their own I (in the sense in which they understand this word, i.e., their own individual person), which thus also constitutes the limit of their ability to think clearly. For them, their own individual I is the only true substance, and reason is merely an accident of this substance. Their own person does not present itself to them as a particular expression of reason; instead, reason is present simply in order to assist this person in making his way in the world, and if he were able to manage

55. Kant (1900–), Prol, 4: 257.

56. Fichte (1964–), WLnm, IV/2: 240.

equally well without reason then we could dispense with it, and it would not exist at all . . . The relationship between reason and individuality in the *Wissenschaftslehre* is just the reverse. Here, the only thing that exists in itself is reason, and individuality is something accidental. Reason is the end and personality is the means; the latter is merely a particular expression of reason, one that must increasingly be absorbed into the universal form of the same. For the *Wissenschaftslehre*, reason alone is eternal, whereas individuality must ceaselessly die off. Anyone who will not first accommodate his will to this order of things will never obtain a true understanding of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁵⁷

Here, incidentally, we have a straightforward case in which philosophical failure to understand the *Wissenschaftslehre* is said to reflect moral failure to understand autonomy. For the pure or absolute I—or, in what turns out to be the most adequate formulation according to the new method, the pure will—is the transcendental ground of the moral law. So anyone who does not grasp this transcendental condition must also not grasp its normative derivative.

A second way to understand the charge that Fichte is a subjective idealist does not commit the mistake of denying that he is an empirical realist. According to this version of the accusation, however, his empirical realism is inadequate because it is based on grounds that are subjective in the sense that they are *merely* practical and thus leave open the possibility of *theoretical* skepticism about freedom. Thus Ameriks points out that, whereas Kant sees the need for a theoretical demonstration of transcendental idealism and of the noncontradictoriness of practical freedom *prior* to any affirmation of the primacy of practical reason, Fichte's version of practical primacy precludes any such theoretical demonstration.⁵⁸ Surely this means that, even if Fichte were right about the demands of the moral law, it would remain possible that the best position in theoretical philosophy is incompatible with practical freedom, which would then turn out—along with the moral law itself—to be no more than an unavoidable but nevertheless illusory idea.

There is something to this criticism. Fichte is hardly at his best when engaging with positions other than his own, and his depictions of transcendental realism do not account for either the attractions or the multiple

57. Fichte (1964–), WLn, I/4: 257–258.

58. Ameriks (2000a), 184, 216.

possible variations of the view. One might also find some basis for ascribing this version of the accusation of subjective idealism to Schelling and Hegel. Certainly they think both that Fichte gives too much primacy to the practical and that, as a result, he is inadequately guarded against skepticism.

The idea that Fichte is a subjective idealist because he is *totally* unguarded against theoretical objections seems to depend on an interpretation that I have already criticized, according to which the moral law is not only the *ratio cognoscendi* but also the *ratio essendi* of the system. If this were true, then Fichte could respond to theoretically grounded skepticism only with moral dogmatism. But in fact, as I have argued in Chapter 5, the *ratio essendi* is both practical and theoretical. So, if Fichte's derivations are successful, he should be able to develop an account of the fundamental conditions of experience that ground theoretical-cognitive claims. A purely theoretical philosophy may reach conclusions contrary to Fichte's, but such a philosophy will be genuinely competitive with Fichte's only if it enables an escape from the Agrippan trilemma at least as well as Fichte's does. Fichte does not think that any such theoretical philosophy is possible. But his task is to develop the system in the way he thinks possible, not to develop every possible alternative. The onus lies upon anyone who thinks that an alternative system to Fichte's is possible—that is to say, not merely an alternative philosophical position, but a system that responds to Fichte's complex of problems—to exhibit this alternative.

A third sense in which Fichte may be accused of subjective idealism is that the first-person singular character of his method is hard to reconcile with communication between subjects. This problem is connected to Fichte's inheritance from Leibniz and is reminiscent of the difficulty that pre-critical Kant had in accounting for real interaction between substances.⁵⁹ However, Fichte's problem does not arise from Monadic Individualism. For him, each subject comes to be through reciprocal recognition with another subject, and each subject can show herself to be transcendently justified in claiming immediate awareness of empirically external objects. So no subject could constitute a world unto itself in the sense of existing in a world bereft of other subjects and objects. Nevertheless, each subject must originally construct the world *for herself*; otherwise this construction could not be available for first-person singular reconstruction in philosophy. So it would still seem that each subject has *her own world*: I

59. See 30–36 above.

construct my world in which you exist, while you construct your world in which I exist, and so on. In what sense, then, do we inhabit one world that is common to all? How is communication—including the reciprocal recognition without which no subject could come to be—possible at all? Is there merely pre-established harmony between these worlds, of which there are as many as there are subjects?

Fichte himself becomes worried about this problem and works out an important response at some point between the spring of 1798 and the winter of 1799.⁶⁰ A letter to Schelling shows that Fichte is aware of the importance of his response, which he calls “an even wider extension of transcendental philosophy, *even with respect to the very principles of the same*.”⁶¹ This extension is “a transcendental system of the intelligible world,” by which Fichte means a system of the shared world of subjects, within which real interaction is possible.

In his *Vocation of Man*, Fichte explains both the problem and his solution. The basic methodological principle is the principle of the immediacy of first-person singular self-ascription or intellectual intuition: “I know it [i.e., my action] because I myself am the one who is acting.” Employing this principle as the monistic ground of consciousness, it turns out that “everywhere I intuit only myself and no alien true being outside of me.” To be sure, “in this my world I also assume the activity of other beings who are supposed to be independent of me and autonomous just like me.” There is no difficulty in understanding how these beings can know their own actions, for they know in just the way that I do.

But how *I* can know of them is simply incomprehensible, just as it is incomprehensible how *they* can know of my existence and of my activities, which knowledge I do after all ascribe to them. How do they enter my world, and I theirs, since the principle according to which the consciousness of ourselves and our activities and of their sensible conditions is developed out of ourselves, the principle that every intelligence must

60. See Daniel Breazeale's note in Fichte (1992), 28–29, n.81. In lectures at Jena in the spring of 1798, Fichte is still committed to this problematic account. But by the winter of 1799, his lecture notes include both this account and a new one, designed to solve the problem, which underlies the account in the *Vocation of Man* that I am about to discuss. See Fichte (1964–), WLn, II/4: 312–330.

61. Letter to Schelling, 27 December 1800, translated in Breazeale's introduction to Fichte (1992), 27. See Fichte (1964–), III/4: 406–407.

indisputably know what it is doing—since this principle simply does not apply here? How are free spirits informed about free spirits, now that we know that free spirits alone are real, and that an independent, sensible world through which they might act on one another is quite unthinkable?⁶²

In other words, it seems that intellectual intuition cannot help explain communication between subjects because it can explain only those acts that I can ascribe to *myself* in a first-personal singular manner, and the acts that I ascribe to other subjects are precisely *not* such acts.

Fichte's solution to this problem is that pure will—as we have seen, the transcendental counterpart of the moral law—is “reason itself,”⁶³ is “One Eternal Infinite Will,”⁶⁴ which is not only the common source of all free individuals, but is also “the general mediator”⁶⁵ between all subjects, which constitutes the world as one world.⁶⁶ Hence arises “the great secret [*Geheimnis*] of the invisible world and its fundamental law so far as it is a *world* or a *system of a number of individual wills: that union and direct interaction of a number of autonomous and independent wills with each other*; a secret which already in the present life lies clearly open to everyone's view without anyone noticing it or bothering to wonder about it.”⁶⁷

It is interesting to compare Fichte's situation with that of the pre-critical Kant, discussed in Chapter 1. Kant had to find some way to reconcile reciprocal interaction, to which he was committed by Newtonian physics, with the individuality of substances, which he conceived in a Leibnizian way, in terms of intrinsic properties. He wanted to say that, in a single and undivided creative act, God brings into being both a plurality of individual substances and a law-governed system of their real interaction, which gives rise to a maximally intelligible world. But he could not show that God's creative act was undivided because he could show no connections between the logical ground-consequence relations pertaining to individual substances in virtue of their intrinsic properties and the real ground-consequence relations pertaining to them in virtue of their community.

62. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 294.

63. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 284.

64. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 295.

65. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 293.

66. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 296.

67. Fichte (1964–), BM, I/6: 293.

Now Fichte is trying to account for individual freedom without intrinsic properties. To that end, he treats individual freedom as a derivative aspect of pure will, which serves as the principle of a Holistic Monist system that necessarily includes both other subjects and external objects. But he finds himself nonetheless in a position that is somewhat analogous to Kant's, for he seems unable to account for what he regards as necessary interaction between subjects, who seem to constitute multiple worlds. Like Kant, Fichte attempts to solve the problem through the idea that the common source of these subjects is at the same time not merely the source of their pre-established harmony but rather the constituter of the medium of their interaction.

It seems to me, however, that Fichte's account is in better shape than Kant's because of Fichte's Holistic Monism. At most, it would seem that Kant can show God to constitute the commonality of substances as *possible* beings within the *omnitudo realitatis*. But he cannot show that God constitutes their commonality as *actual* beings. For Kant, God is Himself characterized by intrinsic properties that render Him extra-mundane. For Fichte, however, it is simply a matter of showing that there is exactly one pure will, and hence that each of us is in fact constructing one world-system, with the same pure will as its immanent principle.

This move marks the transition between Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* and his post-1800 development at Berlin. Arguably, these later versions of the system deserve to be called not subjective but absolute idealism. Here the interactive system of all individual subjects is treated as the one divine life.

Fichte continues to speak of intellectual intuition. But an important difficulty now pertains to this notion. As we have seen, the plausibility of the notion depends on its linkage with the immediacy of first-person singular self-ascription. But to the extent that pure will is not *my* will, but rather "reason as such," it becomes unclear how I may immediately self-ascribe both pure will and the normative principle to which it gives rise. How can I *identify myself* with something common to every subject? If this identification cannot be adequately explained, then the claim to immediacy, to intellectual intuition, begins to collapse into the dogmatic-sounding claim of an intuition of something that is metaphysical and external to me. As we shall see, Fichte's absolute idealism is not the only one that must face this problem.

There is yet a fourth sense in which Fichte may be charged with subjective idealism. It is in this sense, I believe, that Schelling and Hegel make the accusation, which can be adequately understood only in light of our discussions in previous chapters of the problems to which German idealism is responsive, and of the way in which it hopes to resolve these problems by systematizing from an adequately transcendental standpoint. The criticism divides accordingly into two parts: first, Fichte's version of the program is argued to remain vulnerable to some connected objections raised by Maimon, although his name is not mentioned; second, these objections are said to result from Fichte's failure to maintain his footing at the transcendental standpoint, which he is nevertheless said to have genuinely attained.

The Maimonian objections to which Fichte is said to remain vulnerable are formalism in philosophy and skepticism with respect to the science of nature that is supposed to be grounded in the philosophical system. The connection between these objections, which together constitute Maimon's version of the Actuality Problem, has been discussed in Chapter 3: if transcendental philosophy shows only that certain conditions are *a priori* necessary for the possibility of experience, but fails to show how these conditions can have *a priori* determinate application to the empirical world, then its transcendental conditions are merely empty forms without actuality, assumed for the sake of explanation, while our actual claims to empirical knowledge remain open to skeptical doubt because they have not been shown to apply *a priori* conditions.

Hegel raises these Maimonian objections in at least two respects.⁶⁸ First, he argues that, even where Fichte tries to avoid formalism, he fails to do so. For his ethical doctrine is incapable of determinate application.⁶⁹ Although Hegel does not draw the consequence, it follows that Fichte has left morality open to skepticism, despite his best intentions. Second, Hegel argues that Fichte does not even try to avoid formalism with respect to his deduction of nature. Here the implication is that Fichte has left empirical knowledge-claims open to skepticism. I want to focus on the second ar-

68. Hegel does not mention Maimon, and the extent of his knowledge of Maimon's works remains unclear. But given Maimon's importance for Fichte and Schelling, it is reasonable to assume familiarity. For discussion, see Bergmann (1967), 248–255.

69. See, for example, Hegel (1970), GW, 2: 415–416.

gument because, unlike the first, it amounts to the charge, not merely that Fichte fails to execute the German idealist programme, but that he misconceives it.

Here is one passage in which Hegel lays out his criticism in very abstract terms: "the end of the system is untrue to its beginning, the result is untrue to its principle. The principle was $I = I$; the result is $I \text{ not} = I$. The former identity is an ideal-real one; form and matter are one. The latter is merely ideal, form and matter are divided; the identity is a merely formal synthesis."⁷⁰ As we saw in Chapter 5, the German idealist system should inherit the circularity of Kant's Deduction of Freedom: the *Factum* of reason should serve as the *ratio cognoscendi* of its own *ratio essendi*, from which subsequent postulates are derived, culminating in the *Factum* of reason itself. Hegel argues here that Fichte's program does not and cannot succeed in completing the circle. To be sure, Fichte's principle—which Hegel here characterizes in terms of the 1794 presentation, as the identity of pure self-consciousness—is a genuine expression of the absolute ground, which must manifest itself as one and the same in both the real factor that plays the primary role in transcendental grounding and the ideal derivatives from that real factor, as Holistic Monism requires. But Fichte cannot return to this identity of real and ideal in his *result*, which never closes the circle by arriving at a determinate and actual expression of his principle. Consequently, the synthesis carried out in Fichte's version of the system remains merely "formal" and lacks actuality.

This is because, Hegel explains, Fichte regards nature as "something essentially determined and lifeless" in both the theoretical and practical aspects of his philosophy. In the practical respect, this is because Fichte shows at most that nature *ought* to become an expression of freedom and autonomy, not that it is such an expression. But Fichte would not recognize this point as a criticism. If nature were already expressive of freedom and autonomy, he would argue, then there would be nothing of moral worth to do, since the moral project of rationalizing nature—in ourselves and in the world—would already be completed. The deeper issue here concerns Hegel's claim that Fichtean morality cannot give rise to any determinate normative judgments, which I will not discuss here. In the theoretical respect, Hegel says that, although Fichte deduces nature as a condition of

70. Hegel (1970), DSP, 2: 75.

self-consciousness and so accords it "an independent status equal to that of self-consciousness," he nevertheless ascribes to it a "fundamental character" of "oppositeness." In other words, Fichte conceives nature as *the not-I*, as what I am not. But then nature has to be lifeless, irrational, and causally determined in a way that is incompatible with freedom. So, although nature is deduced within the system, as a necessary condition of the first principle of real-ideal identity, nature can never be an *expression* of this identity. It is only ideal or derivative, and it does not involve real or free activity.

Hegel does not accuse Fichte of failing to derive *any* constitutive principles of nature. In this respect, Hegel thinks Fichte better than Kant, who maintains the determinacy of nature only as a maxim of reflective judgment, valid on the hypothetically necessary assumption of an intuitive intellect other than our own.⁷¹ But it is one thing to derive constitutive principles of nature and another to derive constitutive principles *that manifest the absolute first principle*: "Light is no irruption of the divine principle in nature, no symbol of the eternal, primordial knowledge imaged by nature. It is rather that through which rational beings that have been put together physically out of enduring and pliable matter can, while speaking to one another, at the same time see one another—just as air is that through which, while seeing one another, they can at the same time speak to one another."⁷² Fichte can derive determinate features of nature—such as light and air, on account of which he claims to be ridiculed by Kantians who do not see how any such features may be derived *a priori*⁷³—only as instrumentally necessary for the exercise of human reason, but not as intrinsically necessary for the expression of absolute reason. In this respect, he contrasts with Schelling, who views light precisely as the "irruption of the

71. Hegel (1970), DSP, 2: 80.

72. Schelling (1856–1861), I/5: 113. The authorship of this essay, published in the *Kritisches Journal* co-edited by Schelling and Hegel, is disputed and has been claimed by both.

73. See Fichte (1964–), ApT, I/4: 305, where Fichte imagines his reviewers saying, "Air and light *a priori*, just think of it! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Come on, laugh along with us! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Air and light *a priori*: *tarte à la crème*, ha ha ha! Air and light *a priori*! *Tarte à la crème*, ha ha ha! Air and light *a priori*! *Tarte à la crème*! Ha ha ha!" To this situation, Fichte responds, "Where did I lose my way? I thought that I had entered the republic of scholars. Have I fallen into a madhouse instead?" He goes on to explain that, according to his understanding of the Kantian revolution, the objects known *a posteriori* are not distinct from, but are instead one and the same as, the objects known *a priori*. In short, unlike the orthodox Kantians of the day, he is committed to a Two Aspects interpretation of transcendental idealism.

divine principle in nature," the third potency of nature, which anticipates human reason.⁷⁴

Fichte must concede this point, while regarding it as unavoidable and hence unobjectionable. For in his view the *Factum* of reason is the active realization of the possibility of autonomy, and the *ratio essendi* thereby disclosed can only manifest itself in other rational agents like myself, not in merely natural objects. A properly transcendental philosophy, in Fichte's view, must progress from what is disclosed in this first-personal singular *Factum* and must therefore proceed *only to conditions that I may ascribe first-personally to myself*. This requirement is *supposed* to be met even when he develops the foundations of the system theologically, beginning—at least in writings published during his lifetime—with the *Vocation of Man*. When God becomes foundational, it is as the divine life and will that lives and wills in me—hence as a will and life in which I participate and which I ascribe first-personally to myself, although it is not peculiar to me as an individual. But Fichte sees no way in which I may first-personally self-ascribe the life of the natural world.

Since natural objects—including the natural world as a whole—are incapable of autonomy, I cannot identify with them on the basis of the first principle disclosed through the *Factum* of reason. So transcendental philosophy has no choice but to treat nature as "something found," not as something constructed systematically that expresses the first principle. If Schelling and Hegel envisage a system that regards nature as an expression of its first principle, then their project is no longer transcendental. To be sure, there is a demand that the circle be closed, that nature be an expression of the absolute. But that, according to Fichte, is the source of the moral project, not a philosophical objection. Thus, as Fichte says in a letter to Schelling, "the reality of nature . . . appears in transcendental philosophy as thoroughly *found* [*gefunden*] and indeed *prepared* and *completed*"—that is, not as something constructed in intellectual intuition, hence not as an expression of the absolute.⁷⁵

To this, Schelling and Hegel may respond, however, that, if Fichte is right, then transcendental philosophy ultimately fails to answer Maimon's skepticism about natural science. For the most Fichte's program could do is to validate those determinate features of nature *which we presuppose of*

74. See Schelling (1856–1861), ADP, I/4: 45–47, and Beiser (2002), 538.

75. See Fichte (1964–), III/4: 360.

necessity in our everyday agency. These features alone could be shown by Fichte to be grounded in an absolute ground from the philosophical standpoint, although they are capable only of grounding that is subject to the Agrippan trilemma from the empirical standpoint. But when it comes to those determinate features of nature *which we presuppose of necessity in natural science*, Fichte's program can have nothing whatsoever to say—although he himself promises to ground natural science in his original prospectus.⁷⁶

Against Fichte, Hegel thinks that it is possible to carry out the German idealist program in a way that includes a response to Maimon's skepticism about natural science. What is required is a rethinking of the transcendental standpoint itself.

Unlike Reinhold, Fichte has some idea of the transcendental standpoint, but it is obviously not an adequate idea. To explain the inadequacy, Hegel thematizes what he calls "reflection," which is the form taken by empirical reasoning—that is, reasoning that is subject to the Agrippan trilemma and hence inadequate for systematic philosophy, though adequate for nonphilosophical usage—when it is employed in the service of philosophical system-construction. Reflection should be compared with what Kant calls empirical practical reasoning, for each, regarded in isolation, intends to establish a totality with an absolute first principle, each is immensely seductive, and each—according to Kant and Hegel—is doomed to failure. Hegel characterizes reflection "in isolation" as "the positing of opposites," and it is not difficult to see here, *inter alia*, some reference to Fichte's law of reflection or principle of determinability, which, as we saw in Chapter 5, underlies the method of construction in the second presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

Part of what Hegel means by this characterization is that reflective philosophy can show the need not only for self-positing but also for the positing of nature, yet it cannot bring the self and nature into a Holistic Monist system, as distinct expressions of one and the same absolute first principle. Thus, for Hegel, an adequately transcendental standpoint is, first and foremost, one that enables the fulfillment of the Holistic Monist requirement. For this alone can satisfy the demand for an absolute grounding, an escape from the Agrippan trilemma. Since Fichte has in effect given up the project of demonstrating the absolute grounding of experience—that is, empirical

76. Fichte (1964–), ÜBWL, I/2, §3.

knowledge, including scientific knowledge of nature—his project is not adequately transcendental. The program must be judged by its fruits. Since, in Fichte's case, those fruits do not include the absolute grounding of natural science, it follows that "the transcendental viewpoint and reason have succumbed to mere reflection and to the understanding; the understanding has succeeded in fixing the rational as an absolute opposition in the form of an idea."⁷⁷

This must mean that there is a flaw in Fichte's understanding of the program from the outset. It must mean that his first principle, although it may be a genuine expression of the absolute, is not the genuine first principle, but rather is one of its derivatives. Since Fichte's first principle is disclosed through consciousness of the moral law, it must also be the case that this is not, after all, the *Factum* of reason—not the actuality in which the absolute *ratio essendi* is disclosed.

What, then, is the *Factum* of reason? In Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, it is with aesthetic experience that the system culminates and with which, presumably, the philosopher—but not the system—must begin.⁷⁸ As is well known, Hegel suggests that religious experience—more specifically, a Christian experience that focuses on the Incarnation—should play this role. In *Faith and Knowledge*, for example, he writes:

This view of the world in the philosophy of absolute subjectivity [i.e., Fichte's program] is not the religious view at all. The philosophy of absolute subjectivity conceives of the bad [*das Übel*] merely as contingency and whim in an already finite nature. Religion expounds evil [*das Böse*] rather as a necessity of finite nature, as one with the concept of finite nature. But at the same time, it expounds an eternal redemption for this necessity, which is to say that it is a truly present and real redemption, not one that is put off into an infinite progress and hence never to be realized. Religion offers a possible reconciliation with nature viewed as finite and particular. The original possibility of this reconciliation lies in the original image of God on the subjective side; its actuality, the objective side lies in God's eternal incarnation in man, and the identity of possibility with the actuality through the spirit is the union of the subjective side with God made man.⁷⁹

77. Hegel (1970), DSP, 2: 77.

78. See Schelling (1856–1861), StI, I/3: 612–697.

79. Hegel (1970), GW, 2: 422–423.

Hegel does not here develop the radical and Spinozistic implication that, if the Incarnation is supposed to disclose a first principle capable of grounding a science of nature, then it must be the Incarnation of God, not only in man but in the whole of nature. Nor does he explain how such an experience, formulated in the terms of a particular religion based on revelation, may claim universal validity. The exact character of the *Factum* of reason remains unresolved for Hegel at this point, I believe. I will return to the issue shortly, when I discuss Hegel's departure from the position developed in alliance with Schelling.

What is clear from the criticism of Fichte as a subjective idealist, who cannot establish the absolute grounding of natural science, is that—for those who accept this criticism—the first principle must be neither peculiarly subjective nor peculiarly objective, but must be equally capable of expression *both* in rational agency *and* in nature. But if it is unclear what actuality might disclose this principle, it is no clearer how to formulate it. Hegel adopts Schelling's talk of the "indifference" of distinct expressions of the absolute, which is not equivalent to no difference at all but which is a difference compatible with sharing an essence.⁸⁰ The system is now envisaged as tripartite, consisting of (1) a philosophy of nature, corresponding to theoretical philosophy; (2) a philosophy of spirit, corresponding to practical philosophy; and (3) a philosophy of the indifference between nature and spirit, culminating in an account of art and religion.⁸¹

6.4

I now turn to Hegel's criticism of the program he had previously shared with Schelling and its appeal to intuition. Does this mark a fundamental break that renders my account no longer relevant?

The absolute idealist version of the program, discussed in the previous section, is seen initially by both Hegel and Schelling as employing some conception of construction in intuition. Now, however, the notion of intellectual intuition is no longer guided by Kant's account of moral consciousness in the second *Critique*. Instead, it is guided by Kant's account

80. I leave for discussion elsewhere the relationship between Schellingian indifference and the scholastic account of distinctions discussed in Chapter 1. It would be worthwhile to consider the pertinence here of the Scotist formal difference.

81. See Harris's Introduction to Hegel (1977a), 59–60.

of intellectual intuition in Sections 76 and 77 of the third *Critique*. There Kant characterizes an intuitive intellect, other than our own, which “goes from the *synthetically universal* (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no *contingency* in the combination of the parts,” and with respect to which there is no distinction between possibility and actuality.⁸²

As Béatrice Longuenesse has argued, these sections—like the doctrine of the postulates in the second *Critique*—rethink the Transcendental Ideal in the first *Critique*.⁸³ For Schelling and Hegel, the key notion is that, in intellectual intuition, everything is seen not as particular but rather as expression of the totality, hence as expression of the one absolute principle immanent within the totality. Such a principle can be characterized in neither the objective terms of Spinoza nor the subjective terms of Fichte:

Thus the philosopher too does not know distinct beings, but rather only One being in all original schematisms of the world-intuition; he constructs, not the plant, not the animal, but rather [the absolute form, i.e.,] the universe in the form of the plant, the universe in the form of the animal; those schematisms are possible only insofar as they can take up into themselves the undivided fullness of unity, thus insofar as they become annihilated as particular. For as such they would limit the absolute being, since they would exclude other forms from themselves. But insofar as each grasps the absolute, and all return to each while each returns to all, they prove themselves as forms of divine imagination, and are truly or really unique, because they are possible with respect to the absolute, for in the absolute no distinction between possibility and actuality is valid.⁸⁴

But once the absolute principle is no longer understood in a way that privileges subjectivity, the idea of a constructive method analogous to that of geometry runs once again into variants of the problems discussed in 6.2.

In a striking formulation, Schelling says: “To say: I know or I am knowing already [involves] the *proton pseudos*. I know *nothing*, or my knowledge, to the extent that it is *mine*, is no true knowledge. Not *I* know, but only totality *knows* in me, if the knowledge that I consider my own is to

82. Kant (1900–), KU, 5: 407.

83. Longuenesse (2000), 261–263.

84. Schelling (1856–1861), FDSF, I/4: 394–395.

be a real, true knowledge.”⁸⁵ Is it still legitimate to speak of intellectual intuition once the Fichtean linkage to the immediacy of first-person singular self-ascription and to the immediacy of autonomous self-legislation has been severed?

Moreover, if Fichte’s law of reflection or principle of determinability is now regarded as incompatible with the German idealist program, are there iterable constructive procedures, as in geometry? The answer appears to be that there are not. Schelling sometimes seems to suggest that what he means by “construction” is nothing more than “exhibition” (*Darstellung*) in intuition—in other words, the demonstration of the universal in the particular.⁸⁶ Kant himself says that “to construct a concept means to exhibit [*darstellen*] *a priori* the intuition which corresponds to the concept. For the construction of a concept we therefore need a non-empirical intuition.”⁸⁷ But not all exhibition need involve iterable procedures in the way that geometric construction does. So the analogy between philosophical and geometric procedure is weakened considerably.

These problems, I believe, motivate Hegel’s abandonment of the language of “intuition” and “construction.” Instead, he develops his own version of the other alternative pioneered by Fichte in his 1794–1795 presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: the successive development of contradiction and resolution that comes to be known as determinate negation or dialectical logic. What should be noted, however, is that, as I have argued in 6.2, construction in intuition and determinate negation are competing interpretations of the same underlying methodological idea: the idea of a metaphysical deduction that begins with the *ens realissimum* and proceeds to trace the necessary delimitations or determinate negations of the “space” of all possible transcendental realities. So the terminological shift need not signify any radical departure, either from Hegel’s own earlier work or from Schelling’s—especially since it may be possible to show that contradiction and its resolution actually play a central role in what the earlier works call construction in intuition.

This is not to say that there is *nothing* at stake in the shift from talk of intuition to talk of determinate negation. As we saw earlier, a significant

85. Schelling (1856–1861), I/6: 140.

86. See, for example, the section on construction in Schelling (1856–1861), FDSP, I/4: 391–411. For instance, in 392–393, n.2, Schelling speaks of “philosophical construction or, what is the same, exhibition in the absolute.”

87. Kant (1900–), KrV, A713/B741.

distinction exists between appealing to a *Tatsache des Bewusstseins* or fact of consciousness—which amounts to claiming an immediate presence to the mind and is not responsive to scepticism—and appealing to a *Factum* of reason, which amounts to acknowledging the immediate and supreme normativity of a principle and which can figure in a complex, virtuously circular response to scepticism. Once the intuition appealed to by Schelling and Hegel is no longer connected to immediate normativity—or, for that matter, to the unmediated character of first-person singular self-reference, which is also quite different from the immediate presence of a *Tatsache*—there is a danger that the immediacy in question will collapse back into the immediacy of a *Tatsache des Bewusstseins*, in this case, a fact of *philosophical*, not ordinary consciousness. Unless this can be prevented, the German idealist program will turn out to be esoteric in the same way as the *Seventh Letter* Platonism championed by Johann Georg Schlosser.⁸⁸

As we saw in Chapter 5, Schelling abandons the claim to universal validity in his early works. Unlike Fichte, he does not seem troubled by the thought that the system is not universally accessible, and he does not develop any explanation of its obscurity. He sometimes seems to suggest that the difference between those who understand it and those who do not is a result of either innate differences or divine grace. Thus he asks: “can [philosophy] be taught or not, can it be attained through practice, or is it perhaps acquired neither through instruction nor diligence, but rather in-born through nature, or bestowed upon man by a divine gift?”⁸⁹ Though not unequivocal, his reply hardly rejects the last two alternatives in the way that Fichte would have done: “It is clear that it is nothing which can be taught; all attempts to teach it are therefore completely unnecessary in scientific philosophy and introductions to it, because they presuppose as necessary an entrance into philosophy—preliminary expositions and the like—are not to be sought in rigorous science.” Hegel, however, is closer to Fichte in this respect. For him, the abandonment of the claim to universal validity is intolerable, and the suggestion that the system is intelligible only to those with innate or divine gifts must be repudiated.

According to Karl Rosenkranz’s report of his lectures at Jena after Schelling’s departure:

88. According to Meist (1993), II, 192–230, Hegel was particularly stung by the the satirical *Aphorismen über das Absolute*, written by Schulze, a.k.a. *Aenesidemus* but published anonymously in 1803. These aphorisms portrayed absolute idealism as akin to Schlosser’s Platonism. For the *Aphorismen*, see Jaeschke (1993), I, 338–355.

89. Schelling (1856–1865), FDSP, I/4: 361–362.

He [i.e., Hegel] protests in the most explicit way against the idea that by its very nature philosophy existed only for the few *elect*, that it required a special genius and a peculiar organization. "We must note briefly that philosophy as *the science of reason* is by its very nature meant for *everyone* because of its *universal mode of being*. Not everyone achieves it, but that is not to the point, any more than it is to the point that *not every man gets to be a prince*. The *disturbing* thing about some men being set over others only lies in this, that it might be assumed that they were distinct by nature and were *essentially of another kind*."⁹⁰

Notice, however, that, unlike Reinhold, here Hegel claims that the system must be universally valid without claiming that it must be universally acknowledged. He may even be suggesting that the system *cannot* be universally acknowledged. For, if princes are not distinguished from their subjects by their innate or God-given gifts, then *anyone* can be a prince, but it nevertheless remains true—indeed, necessarily true—that not *everyone* can be a prince. Still, the crucial point is that, like Fichte and unlike Schelling, Hegel thinks that the German idealist system must be able to claim universal validity, even if it cannot hope for universal acknowledgment.

To overcome the suggestion of dogmatism and elitism, it is not enough for Hegel to shift from the terminology of construction in intuition to one of determinate negation. He must also reject Schelling's impatience with "introductions" and "preliminary expositions," and rethink the *Factum* of reason through which the first principle is disclosed. For, if the system has universal validity, then this must show itself initially in the universal validity of the *Factum* and of the standpoint that the philosopher thereby takes up.

It is here that Hegel makes a series of remarkable moves that are peculiarly his own, while drawing on the resources of the 1780s and 1790s. Returning to Jacobi's characterization of philosophical reason as nihilistic, he affirms that negation is indeed the characteristic expression of absolute grounding. It is in the contradiction-driven dissolution of a set of exhaustive and exclusive alternatives with a common presupposition that Hegel, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, locates the *Factum* of reason that discloses the absolute first principle of the system. Negation occurs both locally and globally: each "shape of consciousness"—each aspiration to absolute knowledge—is claimed to lead to antinomy and hence to its own negation, and, by the end of the work, all "shapes of consciousness" are said to lead

90. Rosenkranz (1963), 186, trans. in Appendix 2 of Hegel (1979), 260.

to antinomy. Since the presupposition shared by all the “shapes” is the nonidentity of knowing subject and known object, it follows that absolute knowledge is impossible on this presupposition. Both locally and globally, the negations may be understood entirely negatively or positively—in Hegel’s terminology, abstractly or determinately. Locally, the negation of each “shape of consciousness” may be seen merely as the dissolution of a particular attempt at absolute knowledge and as nothing more. Globally, the negation of all “shapes of consciousness” may be seen as grounds for “thoroughgoing skepticism” about absolute knowledge and as nothing more. But the negation of each “shape” may also be seen as giving rise to the next, and the negation of all may also be seen as giving to rise to absolute knowledge that expresses the identity of subject and object, spirit and nature.

Whether or not Hegel can successfully make out this claim to determinate negation, it is worth noting that, in this respect as well, Kant’s Deduction of Freedom provides a precedent. Recall that, in the active consideration of conflict between my individual pretension to the absolute and universal normativity of my happiness, and the supreme normativity of the moral law, my response has two aspects. First, there is the wholly negative moment of my humiliation as an empirical subject; then there is the positive moment of my elevation as a free subject capable of autonomy, the moment of respect for the moral law and for myself as autonomous legislator of the law. Negation of my aspiration to absoluteness as an empirical subject has a determinate aspect: my recognition of myself as free, hence as capable of—and responsible for—either acknowledging or repudiating the law of my freedom in my deliberation. Similarly, for Hegel, negation of our aspiration to absolute knowledge as a subject distinct from the object has a determinate aspect: recognition of ourselves as expressions of an absolute principle that is heterogeneous with every empirical ground, hence as capable of either annihilating all putative groundings or elevating them as derivatives from an absolute ground. In both cases, demonstration of the inadequacy of a putative absolute that turns out to be merely incapable of escaping the Agrippan trilemma is at the same time the exhibition of the genuine absolute. Like the *Factum* of reason in Kant’s Deduction of Freedom and in Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, Hegel’s “deduction of pure science” is supposed to show how the first principle can be universally valid, while leaving each of us free to repudiate it.⁹¹

91. See Hegel (1970), WL, 5: 43: “The concept of pure science and its deduction is therefore

Through this *Factum* of reason, Hegel hopes to disclose the first principle of the system, which is initially articulated, neither as natural nor as spiritual, but rather as indifferent to the distinction between nature and spirit, within what he calls the science of logic. Here Hegel makes another important move that differentiates his mature version of the German idealist program from the version on which he had collaborated with Schelling. Whereas he and Schelling had previously insisted that the system must begin with the absolute—by which they meant, the idea of the *ens realissimum* from which the totality of the real is to be derived—Hegel now says that the absolute “is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is.”⁹² This might mislead one into thinking that Hegel has given up the project of a progressive derivation from the idea of the *ens realissimum*. But this would be incorrect. What he means is that the first principle disclosed through the *Factum* of “thoroughgoing skepticism”⁹³ is an initial and still inadequate expression of the first principle, which achieves adequate expression only through its dialectical articulation in the system.⁹⁴ Hegel’s system is still progressive and, moreover, still progresses from the idea of God, although this idea is at first expressed in its most impoverished form, as mere “being.” For “being” and all the other determinations of Hegelian logic are “the *metaphysical definitions of God*.”⁹⁵

Hegel’s logic is the logic of what he calls *the concept*, and so he might seem to depart entirely from the program worked out in alliance with Schelling, which involves construction in intuition. But the concept is a universal that is also singular, whereas intellectual intuition is singular and also universal. They are competing ways of doing the same thing: articu-

presupposed in the present work insofar as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than the deduction of it.” Hegel’s later attitude to PhG is somewhat murky. See Forster (1998) for a useful discussion. But I see no reason to think that he ever gave up the idea that some *Factum* was required, even if he changed his mind about its character, or thought the times had changed. See the passage from the 1827 Preface to the *Encyclopedia* cited as an epigram to Chapter 5.

92. Hegel (1970), PhG, 3: 24.

93. Hegel (1970), PhG, 3: 72.

94. See, for example, Hegel (1970), WL, 6: 555–556: “it may indeed be said that every beginning must be made *with the absolute*, just as all advance is merely the exposition of it, in so far as its *in-itself* is the concept. But because the absolute is at first only *in itself* it equally is *not* the absolute nor the posited concept, and also not the idea; for what characterizes these is precisely the fact that in them the *in-itself* is only an abstract, one-sided moment. Hence the advance is not a kind of *superfluity*; this it would be if that with which the beginning is made were in truth already the absolute; the advance consists rather in the universal determining itself and being *for itself* the universal, that is, equally an individual and a subject. Only in its consummation is it the absolute.”

95. Hegel (1970), EL, 8: 181.

lating the relationship between the individual and the totality in a Holistic Monist system.

Hegel's understanding of the relationship between intellectual intuition and logical concept is illuminated by comparison with Maimon's understanding of the relationship between intuition and concept in mathematics, discussed in Chapter 3. In Maimon's view, intuition is the indispensable medium in which our finite intellects discover universally valid truths. But exhibition in intuition shows only *that* some theorem is true, not *why* it is true. Only when the theorem is conceptualized—freed from intuition—can its ground be grasped. Similarly, Hegel says:

We have already spoken above of the *form* of intellectual intuition; it is the most convenient manner of asserting knowledge respecting—anything one likes. . . . This intuition is intellectual indeed, because it is a rational intuition, and as knowledge it is likewise absolutely one with the object of knowledge. But this intuition, although itself knowledge, is not as yet known; it is the unmediated, the postulated. As it is in this way an immediate we must possess it, and what may be possessed may likewise not be possessed. Thus since the immediate presupposition in philosophy is that individuals have the immediate intuition of this identity of subjective and objective, this gave the philosophy of Schelling the appearance of indicating that the presence of this intuition in individuals demanded a special talent, genius, or condition of mind of their own, or as though it were generally speaking an accidental faculty which pertained to the specially favoured few. For the immediate, the intuitively perceived, is in the form of an existent, and is not thus an essential; and whoever does not understand the intellectual intuition must come to the conclusion that he does not possess it. Or else, in order to understand it, men must give themselves the trouble of possessing it; but no one can tell whether he has it or not—not even from understanding it, for we may merely think we understand it. Philosophy is, however, in its own nature capable of being universal; for its ground-work is thought, and it is through thought that man is man.⁹⁶

In other words, the intellectual intuition claimed by Schelling and Hegel is genuine absolute knowledge. But it is still inadequately grasped and hence “not yet known” until it is conceptualized. For the same reason, the absolute idealist program shared by Schelling and Hegel has the “appear-

96. Hegel (1970), VGP, 20: 428. See 190 above on Maimon.

ance" of being the esoteric possession of a "specially favoured few"—an appearance that is overcome when it is translated into Hegel's conceptual idiom.⁹⁷

Thus Hegel develops Maimon's idea, differing from Maimon insofar as Hegel's practice of conceptualization is not mathematical. And thus Hegel shows that the intuitional method employed by Schelling and by his former self, though open to serious objection, was not a dispensable error. Rather, it was a necessary stage on the way to a method better suited for the attainment of the goal held constant throughout.⁹⁸

6.5

I turn now to Schelling's late criticisms of Hegel. As is well known, these criticisms—set forth by Schelling in Berlin in the 1840s, after Hegel's death, although he had developed them earlier, certainly by the 1820s—are of great importance for several strands of post-Hegelian Continental philosophy, including Kierkegaard's existentialism and Marxism. In contrast, Schelling's positive suggestions—such as his attempt to work out a narrative philosophy of revelation—have little immediate impact in the nineteenth century. But they are foundational influences upon the twentieth-century work of Franz Rosenzweig and Paul Tillich, and upon the work of those who philosophize and theologize in their wake today. Is the account of the German idealist program developed here still relevant to Schelling's criticisms, which might well be called epochal and which surely mark the end, in some sense, of German idealism?

It should be noted first that Schelling never abandons the German idealist program. What he criticizes is the claim that the German idealist system is *all of philosophy*, not the necessity of constructing the system. More specifically, Schelling argues that the absolute idealist version of the

97. Kenneth Westphal has pointed out in correspondence that Hegel's criticism of the appeal to intuition in Schelling and in Hegel's own earlier work is closely related to Hegel's criticisms of Jacobi. On the former criticisms, see Westphal (2000) and, on the latter, see Westphal (1989b). I differ from Westphal insofar as I interpret Hegel's view of philosophical intuition by analogy with Maimon's view of mathematical intuition: as a necessary step in the process of conceptualization.

98. One might go further still and explore the thought that Hegel's conception of the relationship between conceptual comprehension and the historical actuality that must precede it also owes something to this strand of Maimon's philosophy.

program, pioneered by himself and developed by Hegel, should be considered *negative philosophy*, which must be distinguished from and supplemented by *positive philosophy*. The criticism may be put in two connected ways.

First, there can be no derivation of the actual from the absolute first principle or *ratio essendi*. This is because, as Schelling puts it in terms that invoke both Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza and the leap of faith he recommends as an alternative to Spinozism:

In a word, there is no constant transition from the absolute to the actual, the origin of the world of the senses is thinkable only as a complete breaking off from absoluteness, by a leap.⁹⁹

Therefore, the origin of no finite thing leads immediately back to the infinite, but can instead be grasped only through the series of causes and effects, although this series is itself endless and its law has, therefore, not a positive but rather a merely negative meaning, *namely, that nothing finite can arise immediately from the absolute and be deduced from it*. In virtue of which, the ground of the being of finite things is already expressed as an absolute breaking off from the infinite.¹⁰⁰

We know as a matter of fact that there is something rather than nothing and that this something is grounded in a way that is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma, so we seek to ground what there is in the absolute by constructing the system. But we cannot explain why the absolute gives rise to something rather than nothing. Indeed, in his lifelong attempt to construct a philosophy of freedom that is the counterpart to Spinoza's system, Schelling comes to think that the absolute must be conceived as freely choosing to create the world if there is to be freedom for humans in the world: "Here nothing more can be explained by necessity; rather, the transition into being is a free deed. Here all deduction ceases, to the extent to which it is a deduction of something absolutely given from premises that have been determined in advance. Here we separate ourselves from the concept of the dialectician. Here is the point where not the concept but only the deed is decisive."¹⁰¹ On the supposition of the fact that there is something rather than nothing, the system can exhibit the absolute ground

99. Schelling (1856–1861), PR, I/6: 38.

100. Schelling (1856–1861), PR, I/6, 41.

101. Schelling (1969), 116.

for this something being as it is. But the system cannot explain its supposition. It cannot explain *why* there is something rather than nothing. By the same token, even if the categories deduced in the system have determinate actualizations, and even if they can be *shown* to have them, the system cannot explain *why* they have them, for this, too, depends on there being something rather than nothing—on the free deed of creation.

Here Schelling turns a familiar Kantian line of thought on its head. First, it is central to Kant's thinking that much follows of necessity on the supposition *that the world is intelligible*, that the demands of reason are met, and that there is nevertheless great difficulty in justifying this supposition in a way that supports positive metaphysical cognition. For Schelling, however, we are justified in assuming the intelligibility of the world and in claiming positive metaphysical cognition of its rational structure. The difficulty lies in explaining the supposition *that the world exists*, which we can only treat as an arbitrary fact, an act of divine will. Kant thinks that the existence of the world is unproblematic; what is problematic is the essence or intelligible structure of the world. For Schelling, it is just the reverse: the essence of the world is knowable, but the existence of the world is an incomprehensible mystery.

Second, the culmination of the system, in which the *ratio cognoscendi* is derived from the *ratio essendi*, the normative principle from the transcendental principle, can never be the completion of the system. As we have seen, once the absolute does give rise to an actual world, the actuality cannot be fully grounded in the absolute *as first principle*, or else it would be derivable from the absolute. By the same token, however, the actuality of the world cannot be fully comprehended in the absolute *as result*, or the normative culmination of the system. The point may be put both epistemologically and ontologically. Epistemologically, Schelling's argument is that Hegel's Maimonian project cannot be carried out: intuition can never be fully resolved into concept. The preconceptual, singular actuality remains present and even guides the conceptualization:

The identity philosophy was with its first steps in nature, thus in the sphere of the empirical and thereby also of intuition. Hegel wanted to erect his abstract Logic *above* the *Naturphilosophie*. But he took the method of the *Naturphilosophie* there with him; it is easy to see how forced the result had to be of wishing to elevate into the *merely* logical the method which definitely had nature as its content and the intuition of nature as its companion; it was forced because he had to deny these forms of in-

tuition and yet continually tacitly assumed them, whence it is also quite correct to remark, and not difficult to discover, that Hegel already presupposed *intuition* with the first step of his Logic and could not take single step without assuming it.¹⁰²

Once again comparison with Maimon is illuminating. For Maimon, transcendental philosophy could answer the *quaestio quid juris*—the question of justification—only on the supposition of the fact of science. But it could not justify this supposition. Meanwhile, geometry, along with the best of mathematical physics, could show at most that certain universally valid theorems and laws are in fact true. But it could not show us why they are true, for the mathematical demonstrations depended on intuition and were inadequately conceptualized. Consequently, the fact of science remains open to skeptical doubt, and transcendental philosophy, which depends on this fact, remains vulnerable to the charge of empty formalism. Similarly, for Schelling, the German idealist system can answer the question of justification only on the supposition of the fact of existence. But it cannot justify this supposition. Meanwhile, what Schelling calls positive philosophy—which appeals to intuition as expressed in the symbolic language of revelation and mythology—can show at most that certain universally valid claims about the free activity of God are *true*. It cannot fully conceptualize these claims and so cannot show *why* they are true. Thus the free activity of God remains open to skeptical doubt, while the German idealist system remains vulnerable to the charge of empty formalism.

Put into ontological form, Schelling's argument appeals to the point, first made by Reinhold against Schmid, that the absolute—in both God and humanity—is free, not only to be autonomous but also to be heteronomous, and indeed to be evil.

The significance of a philosophy that makes the principle of the fall—expressed in its highest generality, albeit unconsciously—into its own first principle, cannot . . . be advertised with sufficient fanfare. It is true that, as principle of the whole science, it can have as its result only a negative philosophy, but it has achieved much already insofar as the negative, the realm of nothing, is separated from the realm of reality and the uniquely positive through a boundary effecting a cut, since the latter could only shine forth once again after this separation. Whoever intends to know the good principle without the evil, finds himself in the greatest of

102. Schelling (1856–1861), I/10: 138.

errors; for, as in Dante's poem, so too in philosophy, the way to heaven goes only through the abyss.¹⁰³

When the abysses of the human heart open themselves in evil and those terrible thoughts come forth which ought to remain eternally buried in night and darkness; only then do we know what possibilities lie in man and how his nature is for itself or when left to itself.¹⁰⁴

A system whose first principle is disclosed through the *Factum* of reason—the self-conscious acknowledgment of the normative supremacy of pure reason, whether it is expressed in morality, art, or religion—and which culminates in the deduction of the possibility of this *Factum* will not be able to comprehend the freedom to be heteronomous and the freedom for evil. For heteronomy is not merely the absence of autonomy, and evil is not merely the privation of good. Heteronomy is the inversion of autonomy, evil the inversion of good, and they have their own seductive facades of rationality. Strictly speaking, heteronomy and evil cannot be *comprehended* at all. For comprehension is full conceptualization and rationalization, which is impossible in these cases. To the extent that heteronomy and evil *can* be understood, this cannot occur within a system whose entire orientation is to autonomy and the good.

Putting the two arguments together, we might put Schelling's point as follows. It is possible—even necessary—to construct the German idealist system, thereby exhibiting the absolute ground that is immanent within the totality of the real. But this system can only be a lifeless skeleton, a merely conceptual account of the totality. Once the world comes freely into actuality, there is also the freedom to repudiate freedom, the freedom for evil. Without this actuality, the system is empty. With this actuality, the system is, to be sure, a closed circle, exhaustive but nevertheless incomplete. The German idealist program can—and therefore should—be carried out. But it can never give rise to the system of freedom that Schelling once envisaged as a counterpart to Spinoza's *Ethics*. Freedom—both divine and human—makes the system possible, but at the same time freedom remains unsystematizable. Thus the system cannot be the *whole* of philosophy, and it is a short step from this point to the argument that mistaking the system for the whole of philosophy leads, not only to a failure to give

103. Schelling (1856–1861), PR, I/6: 43.

104. Schelling (1856–1861), I/8: 268.

an adequate account of freedom, but to a nihilism in which freedom negates itself, a nihilism that can manifest itself beyond the academy.

These are thought-provoking ideas that point in many fascinating directions.¹⁰⁵ Without impugning Schelling's originality in any way, I have sought to show that, here too, he is working with resources drawn—not exclusively but nonetheless centrally—from the formative debates of the 1780s and 1790s, in which Jacobi, Maimon, and Reinhold are central figures.

105. See, for example, Franks and Morgan (2000).

Conclusion

Finally, in light of the account offered in this book, I want to reflect on three ways of articulating the sense that German idealism can be of little interest to contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. The first is that, as idealists, they cannot also be genuine realists. The second is that their views are irrelevant to contemporary naturalism. The third is that they are simply too obscure to take seriously.

Like Kant, each German idealist claims to be a realist as well as an idealist and, indeed, to be able to defend realism precisely on the basis of idealism. This becomes at least plausible in virtue of two points argued in this book.

First, in many philosophical texts, including those of Kant and the German idealists, the basic point of drawing a distinction between the real and the ideal is to distinguish between the sorts of things and properties that are capable of *grounding* the coming into existence and properties of other sorts of things, which are real, and the sorts of things and properties that are thus *grounded*, which are ideal.¹

Second, Kant and the German idealists differentiate two standpoints from which to draw the distinction between the ideal and the real: an empirical standpoint appropriate to ordinary and natural scientific practices of judgment, and a transcendental standpoint appropriate to philosophy after the Kantian revolution.

1. Cf. Wright (1992), 196: "Let the *width of cosmological role* of the subject matter of a discourse be measured by the extent to which citing the kinds of state of affair with which it deals is potentially contributive to the explanation of things *other than*, or *other than via*, our being in attitudinal states which take such states of affairs as objects."

If the ideal is identified as the mental and the physical as the real, and if an idealist maintains that the objects of empirical knowledge are ideal, then it is certainly hard to be a realist of any meaningful sort about these same objects. But these identifications are plausible only from the empirical standpoint. Indeed, even from this standpoint, the identifications are not compulsory. Whereas no single, detailed exposition of transcendental idealism could articulate the views of Kant and the German idealists, I see no compelling reason to understand *any* of them as holding—like Berkeley—that empirical objects are mental.²

The general view of empirical realism and transcendental idealism that emerges from this book is, rather, as follows. Empirical grounding—the grounding to which the justifications and explanations we give from the empirical standpoint, thus in everyday life and in natural science, are responsible—is vulnerable to the Agrippan trilemma. That is to say, it can be shown—according to Kant, it can be shown in virtue of Newtonian physics—that any justification or explanation given from the empirical standpoint, when challenged, leads either to a brute assertion, to an infinite regress, or to a vicious circle. This raises the threat of Agrippan skepticism: doubt about the genuinely justificatory or explanatory character of reasons given from the empirical standpoint. Unless we can overcome this skepticism, we will no longer be able to regard our everyday and natural scientific distinctions between the real and the ideal as justified. In this sense, we will no longer be able to regard *empirical realism* as rational.

There is more than one way to respond to the threat of Agrippan skepticism about empirical knowledge. One response is to accommodate Agrippan skepticism by adopting empirical idealism: the view that empirical grounding is not genuine grounding, which is to be found elsewhere if anywhere.³ Kant and the German idealists respond otherwise. As I in-

2. In this respect, I am in broad agreement with Beiser (2002), 1–6, that the history of German idealism is best regarded not as a gradual intensification of a Cartesian tendency still present in Kant but rather as a struggle to overcome subjectivism, indeed, as “the progressive *de-subjectivization* of the Kantian legacy.” (6) It should be said, of course, that the absolute idealism of Schelling and Hegel involves the view—developed in Leibniz and present to some extent in Spinoza—that every natural being has at least what might be called *proto-mental* features that ground the emergence of genuinely mental features in some natural beings. But there is no reason to think this kind of idealism incompatible with any meaningful version of realism.

3. Thus empirical idealism is in general the view that empirical grounds are not real—that is, genuinely grounding—but rather ideal—that is, in need of being grounded in something else. The view that empirical objects are mental and so in need of being grounded in a mind is only one variant.

interpret them, they choose to defend empirical realism—the view that empirical grounding is genuinely grounding—by tracing an absolute grounding that escapes the Agrippan trilemma. However, they do not take this absolute grounding to be *continuous* with the empirical grounding whose genuineness they hope to establish. Instead, recognizing that empirical grounding is ineliminably subject to the Agrippan trilemma and that the success of both philosophical and nonphilosophical reasoning depends on their mutual closure, they regard absolute grounding as *heterogeneous* with empirical grounding. On the implications of this heterogeneity, they disagree. But all concur that an empirical object can be *both* empirically real—can play a grounding role in some ordinary or natural scientific explanation or justification—and transcendently ideal—can be, in some sense, the explanandum of a philosophical account that aims to show how empirical grounding is itself absolutely grounded while drawing a sharp line between empirical and absolute grounding. Indeed, all concur that it is only *because* empirical objects are transcendently ideal that they can be empirically real—which is to say, it is only because empirical grounding is itself absolutely grounded that it can be grounding at all.

From this revolutionary movement arises a family of substantive philosophical programs, whose success in defending empirical realism cannot be known in advance. But no obvious incompatibility with empirical realism follows immediately from the commitment of these programs to transcendental idealism, in the senses in which I have interpreted these terms. To be sure, contemporary philosophers use “realism” and “idealism” or “antirealism” to signify a variety of contrasts. I have argued only that the transcendental idealist program as I understand it is not *immediately* incompatible with empirical realism in *one* sense that seems entirely genuine and that is known to contemporary philosophy.⁴ If there are those who wish to argue that this program is nevertheless incompatible with empirical realism in some other sense, and that this other sense is the authentic one, then the burden of proof is theirs. Otherwise, if there is an incompatibility between transcendental idealism and empirical realism, then it will be not immediate but rather the result of the program’s failure.

Can German idealism have any pertinence to contemporary Anglo-American philosophy in light of the current dominance of varieties of naturalism?⁵ Agreeing on the whole that naturalism is a good thing, Anglo-

4. See Wright (1992).

5. For a striking formulation of the claim that German idealism is incompatible with contem-

American Kantians tend to divide from Anglo-American post-Kantians precisely on the question of whether a reconstructed Kantianism or a reconstructed German idealism is better described as naturalist.⁶ But "naturalism" is used to signify a bewildering range of commitments.

If (1) a naturalist is someone who believes that there is no need for a philosophical discipline distinct from natural science, or that philosophy is methodologically continuous with natural science, then neither Kant nor the German idealists are naturalists. Nor is any philosopher who accepts the need for some distinction between the empirical and transcendental standpoints.

If, however, (2) a naturalist is someone who believes that the only possible entities are the empirical objects studied in natural science, then,

porary naturalism, see Rosen (1994), 276–277: "most of the good philosophers writing in the 19th century took it for granted that *the world as a whole* was in some sense psychic—penetrated through with thought or mentality—and hence that the study of Mind was the proper foundation for the study of absolutely everything. These days, of course, we can hardly take the idea seriously. Metaphysical idealism of the old German sort strikes us as simply incredible. . . . The Mind of the idealists was, after all, a very peculiar thing by our lights: an entity not quite identical with anything we encounter in the natural world—and this includes the 'subject' of empirical psychology—which nonetheless somehow constitutes or conditions that world. And the trouble with idealism is that we just can't bring ourselves to believe in this Mind any more. A flexible and relatively undemanding naturalism functions as an unofficial axiom of philosophical common sense. This naturalism is so vague and inchoate that any simple formulation will sound either empty or false. But it is a real constraint: and one of its implications is that if we believe in minds at all, they are the embodied minds of human beings and other animals. . . . And since it is just plain obvious that empirical, embodied minds do not actively constitute the bulk of inanimate nature, the idea that the world as a whole is in some sense mental can only strike us as an incredible fantasy. So understood, the problem of idealism is about as dead for us as a philosophical problem can get." Here Rosen makes two striking assumptions: first, that there is a community of "philosophical common sense" for whom he may speak with neither hesitation nor qualification; second, that it is obvious both what "the problem of idealism" is and that German idealism is a version of empirical idealism.

6. Bird (1962) and Strawson (1966) pioneered the "nonmetaphysical" reading of Kant, which attributes to him a distinctively philosophical (hence on one construal, nonnaturalistic) method along with—in some sense—naturalistic commitments. Some, like Strawson, regard Kant's philosophy as having "two faces": a naturalistic face and a nonnaturalistic face, between which it is possible to draw a sharp distinction. Others think that no such distinction is needed, since Kant has only one face, a naturalistic one. The reading has numerous variants, as does the "nonmetaphysical" reading of German idealism—usually, of Hegel—which similarly attributes to him a distinctively philosophical method along with some set of adequately naturalistic commitments. This view was pioneered by Findlay (1958) and Hartmann (1972). For more recent developments, see, for example, Pinkard (1988), (1994), (2000), (2002); Pippin (1982), (1991), (1995), (1997), Redding (1996), Rosen (1988), and Stern (1994). Again, there are both two-face and one-face variants.

according to the argument of this book, the German idealists are naturalists but Kant is not. For, in light of his Monadic Individualism in metaphysics and his Newtonian holism in physics, Kant is committed to the existence of supersensible entities or things in themselves, which are not subject to the laws of nature. In contrast, as Holistic Monists, German idealists deny the existence of any such entities. The absolute first principle in which they ground empirical objects is not sensible, but it is also not an entity.

There are at least two other senses in which the question of naturalism is worth raising here. In one sense, (3) a naturalist is someone who eschews all metaphysical claims, limiting philosophical inquiry to some conceptual scheme shared by some group, by all finite rational beings, or by all human beings, or by some more local community. In another sense, (4) a naturalist is someone whose metaphysical commitments are entirely secular, someone who makes no theological claims.

On the interpretations offered here, neither Kant nor the German idealists are naturalists in either of these senses. All of them make metaphysical claims that transcend the limits of anything describable as "our conceptual scheme," anything that contrasts with "the in itself." Indeed, all of them make claims that are, in some recognizable sense, theological—which is not to deny that each is in some way a theological revolutionary.

In Kant's case, both of these theses are controversial. One of the most impressive strands of recent Kant interpretation has taken pains to argue that Kant's transcendental idealism may be construed as a Two Aspects view that involves no existential commitments beyond the limits of possible human experience. Even among those who think Kant is committed to the existence of supersensible things in themselves as noumena in the negative sense, some would balk at the suggestion that he has substantive commitments to the existence of noumena in some positive sense that includes being grounded in God. On the interpretations offered here, however, Kant has such commitments, and they are metaphysically substantive, notwithstanding the fact that they are demonstrable only from the practical point of view.

As for the German idealists, I think it is relatively uncontroversial that they are not naturalists in the third sense. At any rate, in my view, it should not be controversial. Responding to Maimon's version of the Actuality Problem confronting transcendental argumentation—to the worry that, even if some line of philosophical reasoning is necessary *for us*, it is nevertheless a merely formal line of reasoning that shows how we must think

but not how things actually are—is one of the chief objectives of German idealist methodology.

What is and should be controversial is whether they are nonnaturalists in the fourth. Some impressive recent commentaries seek either to downplay the importance of theology within their projects or to read their overtly theological claims as claims about the structure of the human community.⁷ I would argue, however, that those who take the former view underestimate the central importance of ontotheology—notably, the identification of God as the absolute first principle required for an escape from the Agrippan trilemma—for the German idealist program in its most fundamental formulations. Meanwhile, those who think it *obvious* that the God of German idealism is not really God, on account of not being a supersensible entity, have not taken seriously a range of possibilities that go beyond what is sometimes called orthodox theology in both Judaism and Christianity. In particular, they have not taken seriously the possibility that Spinozism—which can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to Spinoza's own view—may be described not only as the naturalization of theology but also as the theologization of nature. German idealists naturalize theology insofar as they reject all supernatural entities, including a supernatural divinity. But they theologize nature insofar as they maintain that nature is possible, as the object of empirical knowledge, only if the categorial forms of nature are transcendently derivable from an absolute first principle that is appropriately characterized as divine.⁸ Whether the German idealists have theological views that can be reconciled with some version of theological or religious orthodoxy is quite different from the question whether they have genuinely theological or religious views at all. I have not addressed the former question in this study.⁹

7. For an example of the former, see Pippin (1989). For an example of the latter, see Redding (1996) and my review in Franks (2001).

8. Donagan (1991) raises the question of whether Spinoza naturalizes metaphysics or supernaturalizes nature. He argues for the latter possibility, on the grounds that Spinoza seems to take a holistic, proto-Quinean approach to the theoretical and observational aspects of science, and hence that he has no distinctively *a priori* method for metaphysics. Whether or not Donagan is right about Spinoza, his argument can be turned on its head in the case of German idealism. For Quine formulated his holism precisely against a descendant of the Kantian/German idealist distinction between the philosophical and empirical standpoints—namely, Carnap's. Consequently, if employing a distinctively *a priori* method in philosophy is sufficient, then the German idealists must be said to supernaturalize nature.

9. For an insightful discussion of this question, see O'Regan (1994).

In my view, then, there is a sense in which the German idealists are naturalists but Kant is not. For they reject the supersensible things in themselves to which he is committed. As I have argued, however, they remain committed to *the in itself*, understood as the absolute ground of the possibility of experience. What they reject is any description of the in itself in terms of *things*, because they think that no such description could be sufficiently *heterogeneous* to empirical grounding. Consequently, they are not naturalists in the other senses I have discussed. If my interpretation is correct, then I doubt that many contemporary philosophers who call themselves naturalists would apply the term to the German idealists.

Does this deprive German idealism of contemporary relevance?

I hope that relevance consists not merely in fundamental agreement with prevalent contemporary views, but rather in the provocation to rethink those views. As I have presented it here, the German idealist program responds to problems about justification and explanation that remain live, at least in analogous forms, within contemporary philosophy. Moreover, the German idealist mode of response can be motivated without appeal to any *antecedent* religious convictions. Historically, to be sure, the identification of the absolute first principle as the divine seems to have been there from the dawn of philosophy and is surely present from the beginning of each German idealist's career. Methodologically, however, this identification, along with some interpretation of religion as implicitly acknowledging the principle, can come late in the story. It is just because the identification *can* come late in the story that some religious thinkers—perhaps out of considerations close to Jacobi's, perhaps for reasons closer to Schelling's—regard German idealism as inadequate for a genuine understanding of religion.¹⁰

If a naturalist is someone who rejects any philosophical position with a theological dimension *out of hand and without argument*, then it is a form of dogmatism whose influence is regrettable. No doubt, there are theological philosophers who are equally dogmatic in their rejection of any wholly secular philosophy, but, in my view, the German idealists are not among them. What they assume is that religion—like, say, ethics and aesthetics—is a region of human life—of judgment and doctrine, as well as ritual and worship—that is subject to specific kinds of skepticism and that merits a philosophical account, whether that account expresses skepticism or tries

10. See, for example, the views of Franz Rosenzweig in Franks and Morgan (2000).

to respond to it. The burden of proof is on those who think that there should be no philosophical account of religion in this broad sense.

What, then, of the thought that German idealism is too obscure to take seriously? Presumably, this presupposes that the obscurity in question results not from the genuine difficulty of the subject matter but from either muddle-headedness or obscurantism—or an unholy combination of the two. I have argued here, however, that a philosophically motivated commitment to the heterogeneity of philosophical grounding leads to the idea of a special standpoint for philosophy, and thus to the idea that some language will be used differently from that standpoint. These uses will therefore be misunderstood, or not understood at all, by those who do not occupy the required standpoint. Thus a certain obscurity follows from the very nature of the German idealist project. What remains to be seen, however, is the extent to which the actual obscurities of German idealist texts can be explained in this way.

Studies of German idealists often claim contemporary interest on the ground that some reconstructed version of German idealism fits a description with acknowledged contemporary appeal, such as “nonreductive naturalism.” This has not been my strategy, although German idealism, as I understand it, is certainly nonreductive and is in some sense naturalistic. First, I have focused precisely on the aspect of German idealism that is least fashionable: the systematization project that inherits and transforms an ancient tradition of ontotheology that could hardly have less contemporary appeal. Second, I have sought to reconstruct, not a philosophical position or family of positions resulting from this project, but rather the complex of problems to which the project is responsive. Some of these problems—some versions of post-Kantian skepticism, for example—have contemporary analogues, which arise in turn from the analogies between earlier developments in Anglo-American philosophy and the Kantian or transcendental turn. Other problems—those that motivate the quest for absolute grounding—will seem less familiar. Even in this case, however, there are contemporary analogues, for example in epistemology and in moral philosophy, where Agrippan skepticism remains a topic of discussion.

What is least contemporary, then, is the idea that the threat of Agrippan skepticism underlies all the problems of philosophy, and that the solution may lie in some—perhaps heterodox—version of philosophical theology. It seems to me, however, that if, in the history of philosophy, we seek to

recognize ourselves in the other, this is worthwhile only if we also recognize the other in ourselves.

If we do not reconstruct the attractions of the ontotheological interest in the absolute—of which German idealism is arguably the most sophisticated version—can we responsibly decide that this ancient tradition is dead? Without any such reconstruction, can we know how to retrieve from German idealism those philosophical treasures that have not lost their sparkle? Is it wise in philosophy to exclude in advance the possibility that something long presumed dead will surprise us with its vitality?

Bibliography

1. Main Primary Texts

Citing the main texts of German idealism is a complicated business. Only in the case of Kant is there both an excellent standard German edition and an excellent standard English edition that refers to the pagination of the German edition. The works of the other major figures are often widely available only in nineteenth century editions that are neither exhaustive nor text-critical. Although critical editions are in various stages of preparation and publication, not all the major texts have yet been included and, unlike the standard German edition of Kant's works, these editions are typically available only in research libraries, which alone can afford them. Many English translations of German idealist texts, some excellent, have been published in the last thirty years, but they are not uniformly good and many important texts have yet to be translated.

In the following systems of citation current conventions of the scholarship on each corpus, where they exist, have been followed. I have cited the standard editions and used standard abbreviations. I have also noted available translations, although I have often modified them in quotations. If no translation is available, then the translation given in the text is entirely my own.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814)

All references are given by division, volume and page of: Fichte (1964–).
J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,

eds. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacobs, and Hans Gliwitzky. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-holzboog. This critical edition, which contains many texts unpublished by Fichte, has now replaced the nineteenth-century edition as the basis for Fichte scholarship. The edition gives the pagination of the old and more available edition where relevant. English translations sometimes give both paginations. The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- Ankündigung *Seit sechs Jahren* (1801); *Public Announcement of a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans., Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1994), *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, 185–201, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- ApT *Annalen des philosophischen Tons* (1797); *Annals of Philosophical Tone*, partially trans., Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1988), *Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, 341–354, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- BM *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (1800); trans. Peter Preuss as Fichte (1987), *The Vocation of Man*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- EM *Eigene Meditationen über Elementarphilosophie* (1793–1794); *Private Meditations on Elementary Philosophy*.
- GNR *Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796–1797); trans. Michael Baur as Fichte (2000), *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GW *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794–1795); *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, trans., Peter Heath and John Lachs in Fichte (1982), *Science of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RA *Rezension der Aenesidemus* (1794); *Review of Aenesidemus*, trans. Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1988), 55–77.
- RC *Rezension der Creuzer* (1793); *Review of Creuzer*, trans. Daniel Breazeale as Fichte (2001) in *Philosophical Forum*, 32(4): 289–296.
- SB *Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum über das eigentliche Wesen der neuesten Philosophie* (1801); *A Crystal Clear Report to the General Public concerning the Actual Essence of the Newest Philosophy*, trans. William Botterman and William Rasch, in Ernst Behler, (1987) (ed.), *Philosophy of German Idealism*, 39–115, New York: Continuum.
- SS *Das System der Sittenlehre* (1798); *The System of Ethics*, trans. and ed. Günther Zöller (forthcoming), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ÜBWL *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (1794/1798); *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans., Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1988), 94–135.

- ÜGGW *Über den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung* (1798); *The Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World*, trans. Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1994), 142–154.
- VDWL *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre* (1797–1798); *An Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1994), 1–118.
- VKO *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* (1790); trans. Garrett Green, as Fichte (1972), *Attempt at a Critique of all Revelation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- VS *Vergleichung des vom Herrn Professor Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre* (1795); *A Comparison of Professor Schmid's System with the Wissenschaftslehre*, partially trans. Daniel Breazeale in Fichte (1988).
- WLnm *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1796/1799); *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo*, trans., Daniel Breazeale as Fichte (1992), *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- ZV Fichte (1794), *Zürcher Vorlesungen über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*. From Lavater's transcript, ed. Erich Fuchs, Neuried: Ars Una; *Zürich Lectures on the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831)

The following works are cited by volume and page or letter:

- Hegel (1970). *Werke im zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. Based on a nineteenth-century edition, this remains the standard edition, although a critical edition is in progress.
- Hegel (1953). *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. Hamburg: Meiner.

The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- Briefe Hegel (1953); partially trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler in Hegel (1984), *Hegel: The Letters*, eds. C. Butler and C. Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- DSP *Differenz zwischen der fichte'schen und schelling'schen System der Philosophie* (1801); trans. H. S. Harris and W. Cerf as Hegel (1977a), *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- EL *Die Enzyklopädie des philosophischen Wissens, erster Teil: Logik* (1817/1827); trans. T. F. Geraets, H. S. Harris and W. A. Suchting as Hegel (1991), *Encyclopedia Logic*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991.
- GW *Glauben und Wissen* (1802); trans. W. Cerf and H. S. Harris as Hegel (1977b), *Faith and Knowledge*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

- PhG *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807); trans. A. V. Miller as *Hegel* (1977c) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SPDI *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus* (1796?), in Jamme, Christoph and Helmut Schneider (1984), *Mythologie der Vernunft. Hegels 'ältestes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus'*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. *The Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism*, trans. H. S. Harris in H. S. Harris (1972), *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770–1801*, 510–512, Oxford: Clarendon Press. This text was found among Hegel's papers by Franz Rosenzweig who published it in 1917, assigned its title and ascribed it to Schelling. The authorship of the text remains disputed, although it is now widely held to be by Hegel himself.
- WGM *Wie der gemeine Menschenverstand die Philosophie nehme—dargestellt an den Werken des Herrn Krug* (1802); *How the Ordinary Human Understanding Takes Philosophy—Displayed in the Works of Mr. Krug*, trans. H. S. Harris in di Giovanni and Harris (trans. and eds.) (2000), 292–310.
- WL *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1812–1816); *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, London: Allen and Unwin, 1969.
- VSP *Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zu Philosophie*; *On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy* (1802), trans., H. S. Harris, in di Giovanni and Harris (2000), 311–362.

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819)

Works cited:

- Jacobi (1787). *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus*. Breslau: Loewe. Reprinted (1983), with the 1815 Vorrede, New York: Garland.
- Jacobi (1792). *Eduard Allwills Briefsammlung*. Königsberg: Nicolovius.
- Jacobi (1998–). *Werke*, Eds. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke. Hamburg: Meiner. This critical edition is still incomplete, but because of its significant improvements, I cite it where possible rather than the nineteenth-century edition, which was prepared under Jacobi's supervision and is intended to reflect his mature views rather than his development.

The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- 1815 Vorrede *Vorrede* (1815), cited from Jacobi (1983); *Preface and also Introduction to the Author's Collected Works*, trans. George di Giovanni in Jacobi (1994), *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, 537–590, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- DHüG *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus* (1787),

- cited from Jacobi (1983); *David Hume on Faith or Idealism and Realism*; trans. George di Giovanni in Jacobi (1994), 253–338.
- EA *Eduard Allwills Briefsammlung* (1792); *Edward Allwill's Collection of Letters*, trans. George di Giovanni in Jacobi (1994), 379–496.
- ÜLS *Über die Lehre des Spinozas in Briefe an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) (expanded version, 1789), cited from Jacobi (1998–), *Werke*, eds. Klaus Hammacher and Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner; *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn*, trans. George di Giovanni in Jacobi (1994), 173–251, 339–378.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

All references are given by volume and page of the Akademie edition, *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900–), except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited by the standard A and B pagination of the first (1781) and second (1787) editions, respectively. The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- BJPM *Bemerkungen zu Jakob's Prüfung der Mendelssohn'schen Morgenstunden* (1786); *Remarks on Jakob's Examination of Mendelssohn's Morning Hours*.
- B *Briefwechsel*; Kant (1999), *Correspondence*, trans. Arnulf Zweig, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- EMB *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* (1763); *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*, trans. David Walford in Kant (1992), *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, eds. David Walford, Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood, 107–202, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- GMM *Die Grundlegung der Metaphysik zur Moral* (1785); *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor in Kant (1996), *Practical Philosophy*, eds. Mary J. Gregor, Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood, 37–108, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ID *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis* (1769); *Of the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World* [known as *Inaugural Dissertation*], trans. David Walford in Kant (1992), 373–416.
- KpV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788); *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor in Kant (1996), 133–272.
- KrV *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (A edition 1781, B edition 1787); trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood as Kant (1998), *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ND *Principiorum Primorum Cognitionis Metaphysicae Nova Delucidatio*

- (1755); *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*, trans. David Walford in Kant (1992), 1–46.
- PFM *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* (1793/1804); *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, trans. Peter Heath in Kant (2002), *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, eds. Henry Allison, Peter Heath, Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood, 337–424, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Prol *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (1783); *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*, trans. Gary Hatfield, in Kant (2002), 29–170.
- TGS *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766); *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, trans. David Walford in Kant (1992), 301–360.
- VeG *Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume* (1768); *Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space*, trans. David Walford in Kant (1992), 361–372.
- VpR *Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre* (1817); *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*, trans. Allen W. Wood in Kant (2001), *Religion and Rational Theology*, eds. Allen W. Wood, George di Giovanni, and Paul Guyer, 335–452, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- VpT *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen Ton in der Philosophie* (1796); *On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy*, trans. Peter Heath in Kant (2002), 425–446.
- WHD *Was heist: sich im Denken zu orientieren?* (1786); *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?*, trans. Allen W. Wood in Kant (2001), 1–18.

Salomon Maimon (1753–1800)

Works cited by volume and or page:

- Maimon (2000a). *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. V. Verra. Hildesheim: Olms. This is a photostatic reproduction of the originally published texts, first published in 1965–1976. No critical edition exists. For an improved edition of Maimon's first major published work of philosophy, see Maimon (2004), *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie*, ed. Florian Ehrensperger, Hamburg: Meiner.
- Maimon (2000b). *Giva'ath ha-Moreh*, eds. S. H. Bergmann and N. Rothenstreich. Jerusalem: Israel Academy. This is an edition, first published in 1965, of Maimon's 1791 Hebrew commentary on some chapters of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed*.

The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- GhM *Giva'ath ha-Moreh* (1791); *The Hill of the Guide*.
- Kat *Die Kathegorien des Aristoteles* (1794); *The Categories of Aristotle*.
- KU *Kritische Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Geist oder das höhere Erkenntnis- und Willensvermögen* (1797); *Critical Investigations of the Human Mind or the Higher Faculty of Knowledge and Will*.
- PhW *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (1791); *Philosophical Dictionary*.
- Strf *Salomon Maimon's Streifereien im Gebiete der Philosophie* (1793); *Wanderings in the Region of Philosophy*. Includes *Über die Progressen der Philosophie* (*On the Progress of Philosophy*) and *Philosophischer Briefwechsel* (*Philosophical Correspondence*), Maimon's correspondence with Reinhold.
- Tr *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* (1790); *Essay on Transcendental Philosophy*.
- Logik *Versuch einer neuen Logik oder Theorie des Denkens. Nebst angehängten Briefen des Philalethes an Aenesidemus* (1794); *Attempt at a New Logic or Theory of Thinking. With Appended Letters of Philalethes to Aenesidemus*. The letters are partially trans. by George di Giovanni in di Giovanni and Harris (eds.) (2000), 158–203.

Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1757–1823)

Original editions are cited since the first edition of Reinhold's collected works remains almost entirely in preparation. The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- BBMP *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen*, Vol. I (1790), Vol. II (1794), Jena: Mauke; *Contributions to the Correction of the Misunderstandings of the Philosophers Hitherto*. During the final stages of the preparation of this book, a new edition was published, which gives the original pagination used here: Reinhold (2003–2004), *Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, ed. Faustino Fabbianelli, Hamburg: Meiner.
- BKP *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, in two different versions. BKP (1786–1787) was published in four installments in *Der Teutsche Merkur*, ed. Christoph Wieland. BKP (1790–1792), a revised and expanded version was published in two volumes, Jena: Mauke, reprinted in 1924. Trans. and ed. Karl Ameriks as Reinhold (2005), *Letters concerning the Kantian Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- K *Korrespondenz 1773–1788* (1983), eds. Reinhard Lauth, Eberhard Heller and Kurt Hiller. Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: frommann-holzboog. This is the first published volume of a projected critical edition of Reinhold's collected works.
- SLF *Sendschreiben an J. C. Lavater und J. G. Fichte* (1799), Hamburg: Perthes; *Open Letter to Lavater and Fichte*.

- VTV *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögen* (1789), Jena: Widtmann and Mauke; reprinted (1963), Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt; *Attempt at a New Theory of the Human Faculty of Representation*.
- ÜF *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1789), Jena: Mauke, reprinted (1978), Hamburg, Meiner; *The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge*, partially trans. by George di Giovanni in di Giovanni and Harris (2000), 51–103.

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Von Schelling (1775–1854)

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- Schelling (1969), *Initia Philosophiae Universae* (1820–1), ed. Horst Fuhrmanns, Bonn: Bouvier.

The following abbreviations are used to indicate individual works:

- ADP *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses oder der Kategorien der Physik* (1800); *General Deduction of Dynamical Processes or the Categories of Physics*.
- AEIW *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (1796–1797); *Treatises Explicatory of the Idealism of the Doctrine of Science*, partially trans. Thomas Pfau in Thomas Pfau, ed. (1994), *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, 61–138, Albany, NY: SUNY.
- FDSP *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie* (1802); trans. Michael Vater as Schelling (2001), *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy in The Philosophical Forum*, 32(4): 373–397.
- PBDK *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* (1795); *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, trans. Fritz Marti in Schelling (1980), *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays 1794–1796*, 155–196, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press.
- PR *Philosophie und Religion* (1804); *Philosophy and Religion*.
- StI *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800); trans. Peter Heath as *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- ÜMFP *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (1794); *Concerning the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General*, trans. Fritz Marti in Schelling (1980), 35–58.
- VIPP *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen*

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